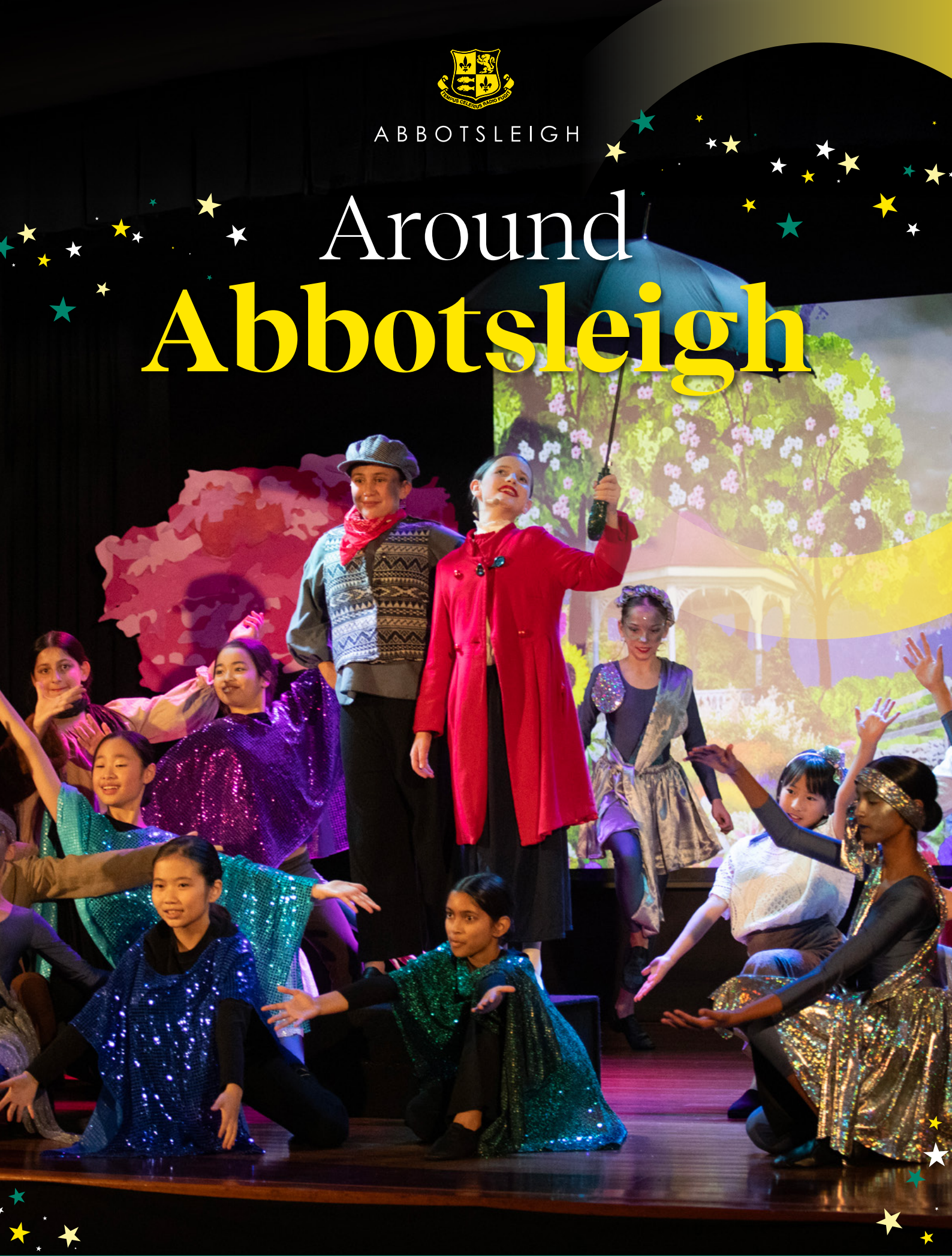
ABBOTSLEIGH

Around Abbotsleigh



Semester 1 2026 Issue 72



Magical: this year's annual Junior School Production, *Mary Poppins Jr*, was a joyful celebration of creativity, collaboration and performance. It provided the perfect platform for students from Grades 3-6 to nurture and showcase their talents, whether in acting, dance, singing, set design or technical roles.



Abbotsleigh acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and acknowledges and pays respect to Elders past and present.

ABBOTSLEIGH

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CONTENTS

4 Innovation, excellence and superb teamwork: hallmarks of our remarkable Abbotsleigh community

6 WiLA: introducing Abbotsleigh's Women in Leadership Academy

7 Our Centre of Professional Excellence is a commitment to investing in our people

8 AI at Abbotsleigh: purposeful, ethical and distinctly human

10 Much more than a spoonful of sugar: the Junior School's delightful *Mary Poppins Jr*

12 Revelling in joy: how Transition girls spread joy and kindness

14 Kindergarten's Grow Your Mind Day delved into aspects of brain power

15 Exploration of the natural world excited Year 1's curiosity and honed their writing skills

16 In Bluey's Toy Lab, Year 2 innovators began to think like real engineers and designers

17 Capybaras: an unexpected mascot for teaching friendship skills

18 A truly warm and memorable Year 4 Father Daughter Dinner

20 Stronger minds: a positive understanding of mental health helps navigate life's challenges and develop a healthy sense of self

22 The Respectful Relationships Education initiative fosters safe, inclusive communities

24 Comedy, emotional depth and a wealth of talent were on display in the Senior School's production of *Freaky Friday*

26 Team Abbotsleigh: our sporting life and the benefits it brings off the courts and playing fields

30 Year 7 You Can Sit with Me ambassadors are modelling positive, anti-bullying behaviours

31 Beyond the classroom: Year 10's Work Experience Week

32 Learning from different cultures: Year 8 Languages Days

34 Hands on: Year 9's ambitious iSTEM project combines biology, coding, engineering and creativity

37 Professional Learning Groups: four former head prefects reflect on their leadership development

38 The Tildesley Shield and the fascinating history behind Abbotsleigh's involvement in this all-girls' tennis competition.

40 From the President of the APA

41 From the Presidents of the ABPA

43 From the President of the AOGU

44 AOGU News

48 Old Girls News

56 Valete

66 Thank you to our Donors and Sponsors



Innovation, excellence and superb teamwork: hallmarks of our remarkable Abbotsleigh community

Megan Krimmer
Headmistress

'Fascinating', 'marvellous', 'remarkable'. These are but a few adjectives that spring to mind as the vibrant world of Abbotsleigh, both past and present, has been brought to life through every page of this superb edition of *Around Abbotsleigh.* Since its foundation by Miss Marian Clarke in 1885, Abbotsleigh has held a strong belief in the education of the 'whole girl', something that is especially evident in this publication. Innovative learning activities such as Grow Your Mind Day in Kindergarten, spectacular musicals – *Mary Poppins Jr* in the Junior School and *Freaky Friday* in the Senior School, plus incredible sporting participation and successes across the whole school are just some of the wonderful activities featured. The wellbeing of our girls, the development of the important human skills of empathy and resilience and the fostering of inclusive and respectful relationships are also highlighted.

Abbotsleigh's strong history has also seen the School at the cutting edge and a number of our important initiatives in relation to leadership, professional learning and Abbotsleigh's response to AI are featured in this edition of *Around Abbotsleigh*.

I am especially grateful to our Deputy Headmistress and Abbotsleigh Old Girl, Mrs Victoria Rennie (Gosper, 1987), for her superb initiative in creating WiLA – Abbotsleigh's Women in Leadership Academy, which was launched at the beginning of the year. WiLA is the first institute of its kind to be established in a girls' school in Australia. Preparing our girls for the future as strong, courageous, articulate young women, ready to lead with integrity and take their equal seat at any table at which they may find themselves, has always been the aim at Abbotsleigh. WiLA will foster and enhance this even further.

Abbotsleigh's Centre of Professional Excellence is another important initiative that was implemented in Semester 1 2026. Developed by our Director of Curriculum and Professional Excellence, Miss Isobel Royston, and her team, this institute will serve to ensure our excellent staff continue to have access to state-of-the-art professional learning so they may continue to inspire our girls' love of learning and pursuit of excellence in all areas – academic, social, emotional, cultural, physical and spiritual.







The rapid development of AI is something that all schools have had to grapple with, and Abbotsleigh is certainly at the forefront in this area. Our girls are prepared to navigate our rapidly changing and complex world and it is crucial they learn to use AI in a way that augments but does not 'outsource' their learning. It is equally important that they learn to use this tool ethically and with great integrity. In her article, our Director of Learning Innovation, Mrs Donna Moffatt, clearly explains Abbotsleigh's ethical, purposeful and distinctly human approach to AI, one which will stand our girls in good stead for both the present and the future.

In addition to the above, this edition of *Around Abbotsleigh* highlights the significance of our whole Abbotsleigh community. Our parents, who have always supported the School, are so important, and it is wonderful to read about the great work of the Abbotsleigh Parents' Association and the Abbotsleigh Boarder Parents' Association. We are also very grateful for support given by the Abbotsleigh Foundation and the Marian Clarke Society.

Also fundamental to our Abbotsleigh community are our Abbotsleigh Old Girls, many of whom are featured in articles in this *Around Abbotsleigh*. Since leaving the gates of Abbotsleigh, these incredible women have continued to contribute to, and make a vital and significant impact on, Abbotsleigh and the wider world in so many areas. Each article is interesting and captivating; equally, each tribute to a 'life well lived' is both apt and poignant.

The world of Abbotsleigh, past and present, is indeed 'fascinating, marvellous and quite remarkable', and *Around Abbotsleigh* Semester 1 2026 has brought to life the continuing development of Abbotsleigh's rich and vibrant tapestry most vividly. I hope you gain much enjoyment from reading this excellent publication.















WiLA: Empowering our girls to lead

By Deputy Headmistress and Head of Senior School Victoria Rennie (Gosper, 1987)

For more than 140 years, Abbotsleigh has been committed to empowering young women – encouraging them to be brave, to speak up for themselves and for others and to step confidently into leadership. In 2026, we are proud to take that commitment to a new level. In April, we launched a groundbreaking initiative that will shape the future of leadership education for girls: the **Women in Leadership Academy** – the first of its kind in an all-girls' school. This academy represents not just a beginning but an invitation for our students to embrace leadership as a journey, one undertaken with purpose, reflection and joy. It is a bold and intentional investment in the courage, intellect and potential of every Abbotsleigh girl. It is designed to open doors, amplify student voice and strengthen the leadership capacity within our community and beyond.

At the launch, we welcomed an exceptional group of female leaders as our guest speakers and workshop presenters. Our keynote speaker was Tracey Ezard, an educator, mentor and author widely recognised for her 'Ferocious Warmth' approach to leadership and her work in building strong professional cultures. Tracey encouraged the girls to reflect on who they are and reminded them never to underestimate the impact of how they show up in the world. She spoke about the importance of accessing both cognitive and emotional skills in leadership, drawing on both head and heart, and challenged students to reflect honestly on their strengths as well as the areas where they need to stretch. Her discussion on reframing power, exploring the ideas of 'power with', 'power to' and 'power within', resonated deeply and prompted thoughtful discussion throughout the day.

Following the keynote address, students participated in a diverse range of workshops led by female leaders from across the Abbotsleigh community and a variety of professional backgrounds. These women generously shared their personal leadership journeys, including challenges faced, lessons learnt and practical advice, offering valuable insight into the many ways leadership can be expressed. The workshops explored themes such as personal brand and leadership lessons from decades of experience, turning curiosity into leadership through technology, leading future careers in a 100-year life influenced by AI, building confidence and purpose, understanding that powerful leadership is not always loud, and learning when and how to put your hand up. Together, these sessions reinforced the idea that leadership is not a single pathway but an evolving journey shaped by curiosity, resilience and reflection.

The day concluded with an inspiring panel discussion featuring outstanding female leaders. Michelle Markham, Director at Microsoft specialising in Cloud Acquisition Digital Sales, spoke honestly about the realities of leadership and her passion for developing others, particularly emerging female leaders, through mentoring and coaching. Annabelle Chauncy, Co-Founder and CEO of the School for Life Foundation, inspired students to consider how leadership can be driven by purpose and used to create meaningful social impact, encouraging the girls to recognise the privilege of access to education and resources and the responsibility to use these to benefit others. Our Headmistress Megan Krimmer spoke about the importance of mentors and the power of leading from behind, highlighting how true leadership often involves creating opportunities for others to step forward.

The speakers' honesty, wisdom and encouragement made this conference an invaluable experience for our students, who are so fortunate to learn from such outstanding role models. We look forward to offering further leadership opportunities in the coming terms, including additional workshops and presentations, as we continue to support our girls on their leadership journeys; journeys grounded in courage, purpose and joy.

The Abbotsleigh Women in Leadership Academy stands not only as a program but as a promise – a promise that the courage, voice and potential of every girl will be recognised, nurtured and celebrated. It is an invitation to lead with purpose, to act with integrity and to embrace the opportunities and responsibilities that leadership brings.

Abbotsleigh's Centre of Professional Excellence

More than a program, our newly launched CPE is a commitment to investing in our people, writes Director of Curriculum and Professional Excellence Isobel Royston

Abbotsleigh has officially launched the Centre of Professional Excellence (CPE), a whole-school initiative designed to support the growth, expertise and leadership of every teacher throughout their career. The centre brings to life a key priority of the School's Strategic Plan: Our Staff Empowered to Inspire.

The CPE provides a clear and connected framework for professional learning, leadership development and career progression. It has been established in response to four identified needs across the School: a structured approach to teacher growth, greater opportunities to develop expertise, clearer professional pathways and intentional leadership development. Rather than replacing existing opportunities, the CPE brings them together under a single vision that makes professional growth more visible, accessible and sustainable for all staff.

At the heart of the CPE is a simple but powerful mission: Be a great teacher. Be a great leader. The framework recognises that professional excellence looks different at every stage of a career, from early-career teachers building confidence and capability to experienced educators leading innovation, mentoring colleagues and pursuing advanced accreditation.

A key feature of the CPE is the new Canvas platform, which will serve as Abbotsleigh's professional learning library and leadership hub. Staff will have access to research, conference presentations, accreditation resources, leadership materials and examples of best practice, all in one central location.

The centre also builds on initiatives already under way, including Professional Learning Groups. These groups strengthen professional dialogue, foster collaboration and create opportunities for teachers across the Junior and Senior Schools to learn from one another.

More than a program, the Centre of Professional Excellence is a commitment to investing in our people. By supporting the continuous growth of teachers and leaders, Abbotsleigh is strengthening the culture of excellence that benefits staff, students and the wider school community.







AI at Abbotsleigh: purposeful, ethical and distinctly human

By Director of Learning Innovation Donna Moffatt

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping the world our students are preparing to enter. At Abbotsleigh, our approach is not simply to adopt new technologies because they are available but to consider carefully how they can strengthen learning, support teachers and help students develop the skills they will need beyond school. The School's work in this area is guided by the Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools and by a commitment to safe, ethical and responsible use.

A key principle underpinning Abbotsleigh's approach is balance. While students need to build technical confidence with AI tools and data literacy, they also need to strengthen the very human capabilities that remain essential in learning and life: critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, curiosity and ethical judgment. AI can support learning, but only when it is used with purposeful pedagogical design.

Within the School's digital ecosystem, students and staff have access to a managed suite of tools selected for their educational value and age-appropriate safeguards. These include Microsoft Copilot and education products, Adobe Firefly, Canva AI, Canvas Ignite AI and Intelligent Insights and Seesaw. These platforms are used in different ways, from supporting staff productivity and lesson planning to assisting students with creative production, feedback, research and learning design. At the same time, the School intentionally blocks platforms that are not appropriate for younger students.

A significant focus has been helping students understand when and how AI may be used in learning. Abbotsleigh developed an AI Assistance Guide to support both staff and students, drawing on research from UNSW and academics specialising in AI. This guide moves across a continuum, from no AI use through to the use of specific AI platforms. Since January 2025, all Senior School task notifications from Years 7-12 have included this guide, helping students and teachers establish clear expectations around academic integrity.

This clarity matters. In a survey of current Year 12 students, many girls expressed concern about being flagged for AI-related cheating, even when they had

not used AI at all. Abbotsleigh's response has been to make expectations explicit and to teach students how to demonstrate their thinking process. Students are encouraged to keep project notes, record AI inputs and outputs, and be prepared to show how their work has evolved. The message is clear: students must do the 'heavy lifting' themselves.

Students have opportunities to use and revise the tools available in Abbotsleigh's IT ecosystem, learn prompting strategies and explore the importance of acknowledging AI contributions to academic work. The school diary now includes clear statements about safe, ethical and responsible AI use, connected to the Academic Integrity policy.

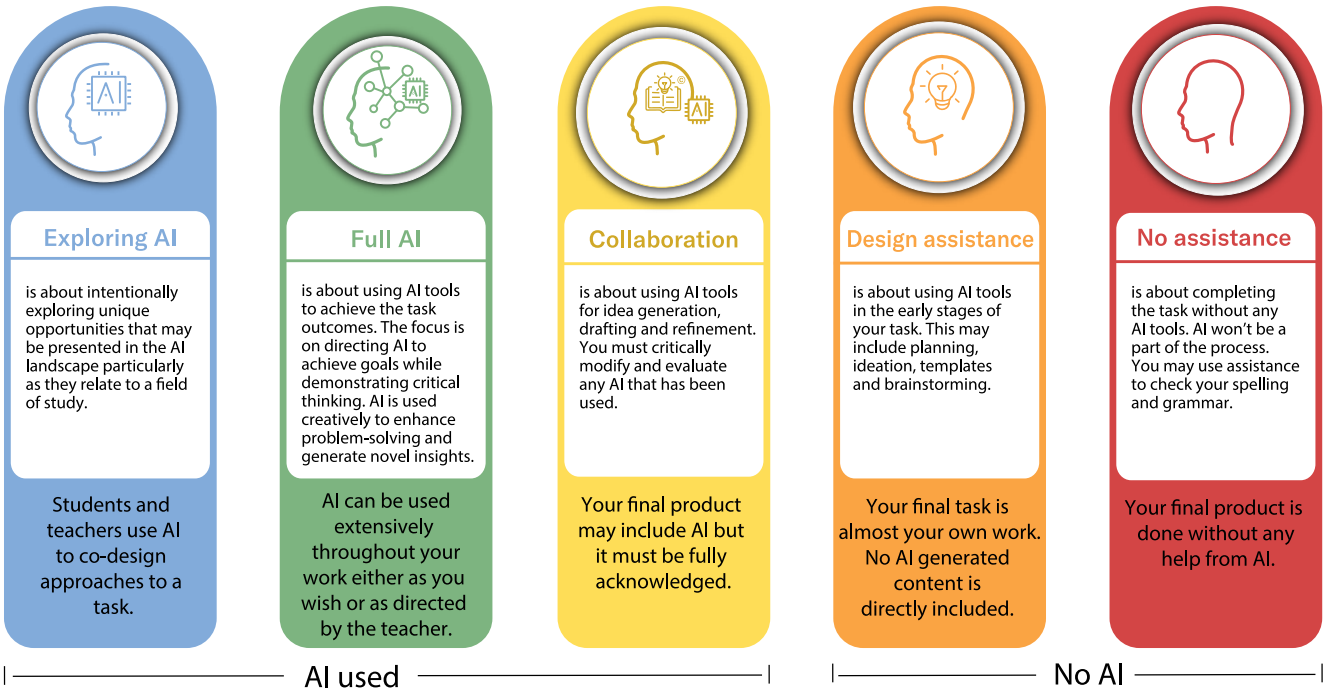
Across subjects, teachers are also exploring how AI can enhance learning without replacing student thinking. In TAS, for example, AI was deliberately incorporated into a game design task to support asset generation, allowing students to focus more deeply on systems thinking, logic structures and complex flowcharting. In English, Stage 6 students have used AI as a 'dialectical partner' to refine thesis statements and topic sentences, while being asked to track changes, reflect on the output and decide when to push back.

AI is also being used to support feedback and revision. Senior students have explored ways to use AI for immediate corrective feedback, including handwriting work, converting it to text, prompting AI for feedback and then revising and repeating the process. This aligns with the School's broader focus on the Science of Learning, retrieval practice, grit and perseverance.

Importantly, this work is not limited to students. Staff have engaged with AI through professional learning, including a Professional Learning Day focused on prompting, iteration, source use and output evaluation. A Professional Learning Group, AI Skills for Future Ready Teaching and Learning, is also exploring practical ways to integrate AI into teaching, learning, feedback, design and workflow. Most recently, Abbotsleigh began a partnership with consultant Matt Bower. Matt is a Professor of Educational Technology in the School of Education at Macquarie University. His work focuses on how contemporary and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Immersive Virtual Reality and other online technologies can be used to enhance learning outcomes and experiences.

The future possibilities are significant, including the use of AI agents to support curriculum planning, lesson refinement, administration, individualised learning and targeted revision. Yet Abbotsleigh's approach remains grounded in professional judgment and human design. AI may be transformative, but the most powerful force in the classroom continues to be the distinctly human capacity for curiosity, empathy and thoughtful pedagogy.

Levels of AI assistance student guide



Perkins, Furze, Roe and MacVaugh (2024). The AI Assessment Scale UNSW (2024). Levels of AI Assistance



















Much more than a **spoonful of sugar**

The Junior School's production of *Mary Poppins Jr* was a joyful celebration of skills, collaboration and creativity, says Production Director Tanya Taylor

The Junior School production of *Mary Poppins Jr* was a joyful celebration of creativity, collaboration and performance. In recent years, we have presented dynamic plays including Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and J M Barrie's *Peter Pan*. This year was extra special as for the first time in over a decade the Junior School students presented a musical.

A wonderful array of characters including Mary Poppins, Bert, the Banks family, Miss Andrew, Mrs Corry and Bird Woman transported the audience back to Edwardian London. The stage was brought to life with beautiful sets and props designed by Stage Crew students, complemented by a state-of-the-art projection suite.

The annual Junior School production provides the perfect platform for students from Grades 3–6 to nurture and showcase their talents, whether in acting, dance, singing, set design or technical roles.

During Term 1, excitement grew as the girls eagerly awaited the production announcement and the reveal of the selected show. In March, more than 160 students auditioned – a testament to the girls' enthusiasm and courage. The audition experience provided a valuable opportunity for students to perform on stage, develop communication skills and build confidence.

The cast embraced the three-month rehearsal process as they developed skills in stagecraft, voice, movement and characterisation. In addition, the girls discovered the importance of collaboration and the power of effective communication. Whether working behind the scenes or in the spotlight, every student played a vital role in creating a memorable production.

It was inspiring to watch the cast transform scripted lines, songs and choreography into authentic, believable performances, developing individual interpretations while staying true to the heart of each character. What was most rewarding, however, was witnessing the girls' personal growth. They brought enthusiasm, resilience and kindness to each rehearsal, encouraged one another, and found the confidence to make brave choices both on and off the stage. It was a privilege to share in their journey.

The joy of presenting *Mary Poppins Jr* extended far beyond the cast. We could not have put together such a spectacular show if it wasn't for the collaborative spirit of the Abbotsleigh community. Senior students volunteered their time to choreograph and assist with stage management. Teachers and non-teaching staff, including maintenance, offered expertise in areas such as set construction, artistic design, costuming and technical support.

A special acknowledgement to Mrs Helen Futcher and Mr Ernesto Mina Ovalle for their creativity, generosity and craftsmanship. Helen's beautiful carpet bag and Ernesto's one-of-a-kind umbrella, along with their countless contributions behind the scenes, helped bring a touch of magic to the Everett Hall stage.

From the first rehearsal to the final performance, the creative journey embodied enthusiasm, commitment, teamwork, imagination and resilience – the very qualities that transform ordinary moments into extraordinary ones. With memories to treasure, this year's production will hold a special place in the hearts of the cast, their families and all who shared in the magic of *Mary Poppins Jr.*

Revelling in joy and kindness

Guided by the Abbotsleigh Learning Framework, our Transition girls learn how to create joy together and contribute to their community, writes Classroom Teacher Mary Santone.











Kirrily Lowe's gentle and evocative story, *Joy*, invited us to wonder: 'What is joy? Where does it come from?' As the girls listened to the rich, poetic language, a tapestry of emotions and ideas began to emerge, reflecting their curiosity, empathy and a genuine desire to explore this concept more deeply.

Initially, the girls offered broad and universal understandings of joy; then through dialogue and reflection, and careful listening, their thinking began to evolve. Each girl gradually articulated a more personal and individualised understanding. This shift highlights the importance of allowing time for thinking to unfold – honouring each stage of meaning-making as essential to deep learning.

Our guiding question, 'What brings you joy?', sparked simple and familiar responses but through sustained enquiry, the girls moved beyond surface-level answers, revealing deeply personal perspectives and rich emotional awareness.

The girls started to move from 'this is what joy feels like for me' towards 'how can we create joy together?'. This marks a powerful moment in their learning – where individual understanding expands into collective responsibility. Through collaboration, dialogue and co-constructed agreements, the girls begin to see themselves as active contributors to the wellbeing of their community.

They designed a 12 Days of Kindness Chart as an extension of their thinking. Each act of kindness was thoughtfully considered, reflecting their growing awareness of how their actions can positively impact others. As they implement the chart, the girls are encouraged to act with purpose, noticing opportunities for kindness and joy in everyday interactions. This fosters both individual responsibility and a collective sense of care, as they realise how small, thoughtful actions contribute to a more connected and compassionate community.

The girls also constructed two 'Joy Trees'. One represented the Fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; the second featured photographs of the girls engaged in joyful experiences, highlighting happiness, connection and positive wellbeing.

It has been a joy to observe the girls developing the capacity to see beyond their own perspectives and to consider the feelings and experiences of others. This ability to 'step into someone else's shoes' reflects both Reggio Emilia philosophy and the Abbotsleigh Learning Framework, where learning is relational and deeply connected to community.

Framed within our Christian context, this exploration of joy is grounded in an understanding that joy is not only felt but shared, flowing from love, kindness, and connection with others. As Scripture reminds us in Romans 15:13: 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him...' This unit of work, centred on both joy and kindness, is gently planting the seeds of compassion, empathy, integrity and generosity.

Rewriting Cinderella

We began this exploration by revisiting the traditional story of Cinderella. The girls unpacked the characters, questioning behaviours and identifying moments of unkindness and exclusion. This allowed them to reflect on what kindness truly looks like, drawing on their own experiences and understandings. From this, they were inspired to collaboratively reimagine and rewrite the story, embedding empathy, fairness and compassion into a familiar narrative.

The enquiry evolved into the planning of our Cinderella Kindness Day, a joyful expression of their learning. Each girl contributed ideas, taking shared ownership of the event. From designing and delivering invitations to welcoming guests, their efforts reflected growing confidence and a deepening sense of belonging within our school community.

They brought their understanding of kindness to life through creative expression – performing, chants, rhymes and songs to communicate their message with enthusiasm and pride. Their actions extended into everyday school life: offering stickers and high-fives in the playground and demonstrating care through acts of service such as assisting with lunch collection for older students.

Planting the seeds of kindness

Through shared dialogue, problem-solving and reflective conversations, the girls are developing the dispositions we value so deeply at Abbotsleigh: empathy, integrity and a heart for service. As their ideas unfold, they are not only imagining ways to show kindness – they are actively living it. They are modelling joy, generosity and care in authentic ways that we hope will continue to grow as they journey through Abbotsleigh and beyond. Kindness remains an evolving and ongoing focus.

Our Cinderella Kindness Story

Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters were **kind, joyful** girls who cared for one another, just like Gabby Get Along. Each day, they tried to treat one another with **respect, compassion** and **kindness**, just like Abbotsleigh's School Values.

When challenges arose, they **supported** each other by taking three deep breaths and using **calm, encouraging** words. They focused on **building each other up** and **working together** as a team.

The stepmother and sisters were **grateful** for all the effort Cinderella put into caring for their home and they always remembered to use their manners, saying '**please**' and '**thank you**'. The stepsisters often offered to **help** with the cleaning, **sharing responsibilities** and staying organised like Oscar Organisation.

When the royal invitation arrived, they were **excited** and **happy** for the opportunity. Even though fastening their dresses was a little tricky, they **worked together** and stayed persistent like Pete Persistent, **helping** one another get ready for the ball.

Cinderella felt a little sad because she didn't have a dress to wear but one of the stepsisters showed **empathy** and **kindness** by offering to lend her one of her own. This thoughtful gesture made Cinderella feel **included** and **valued**.

They all attended the ball together, using **kind** words such as 'I like your dress' and showing genuine **joy** for one another. The stepmother and sisters were **happy** when the prince chose Cinderella to get married and they all had a wonderful time at the ball together.

The End











Grow Your Mind Day

Wisdom via the likes of Wise Owls, Elephants and Guard Dogs helps Kindergarten girls develop emotional literacy, resilience and self-regulation, reports Classroom Teacher Emma Tuttiett













During Camp Week, Kindergarten girls participated in the social-emotional learning incursion, Grow Your Mind Day. This is an evidence-informed wellbeing program that supports students in developing emotional literacy, resilience and self-regulation skills. Grounded in neuroscience and positive psychology, the program introduces key parts of the brain through engaging animal characters, helping students understand how their thoughts, feelings and behaviours influence their learning and wellbeing.

During the day, the girls explored the roles of the Wise Owl (prefrontal cortex), Elephant (hippocampus), Sensitive Octopus (insular cortex), Sifting Sooty (reticular activating system) and Guard Dog (amygdala). Through sensory exploration, craft activities, movement experiences and rich classroom discussions, they developed an understanding of how each part of the brain contributes to their daily lives.

The girls learnt that their Wise Owl helps them make purposeful decisions, solve problems, focus their attention and manage their emotions. They discovered that their Elephant stores important memories and helps them learn new information by connecting new experiences to prior knowledge. Through exploring the Sensitive Octopus, students considered how they recognise emotions and physical sensations within their bodies, developing greater awareness of their feelings and the feelings of others. Learning about Sifting Sooty helped them understand how the brain filters information and directs attention towards what is most important, while the Guard Dog introduced concepts of safety, protection and the body's natural response to perceived challenges or threats.

Through playful exploration, mindfulness practices, collaborative activities and opportunities for reflection, the Kindergarten girls developed a deeper understanding of how their brains work and how they can use this knowledge to support their wellbeing. By the end of the day, they had developed a shared language for discussing emotions, wellbeing and self-regulation, equipping them with practical strategies to support their learning, friendships and personal growth throughout their schooling journey.

To conclude the day, the girls took on the role of 'bucket fillers' by writing thoughtful messages and compliments to staff members. They reflected on the positive impact of their kind actions and considered how showing appreciation can strengthen relationships within the Abbotsleigh community.









Informed writing

By exploring the natural world through observation and stories , Year 1 girls are sharpening their curiosity and honing their writing skills. By Classroom Teacher Meg Lim

This term, Year 1 students have been learning how to write information reports by exploring the natural world around them. Through hands-on experiences and meaningful connections with literature, they have developed not only their writing skills but also a deeper sense of empathy and curiosity about the world.

The unit began with a provocation, in which students used their senses to examine a range of natural objects. These included feathers from Australian birds, a shark egg, a snakeskin, shells collected from local beaches and cicada shells. They were encouraged to observe closely, share what they could see, consider what they already knew and ask thoughtful questions. This process helped them activate their prior knowledge to make sense of new discoveries, laying the foundation for their information report writing. Some of these objects were completely new to many students and sparked curiosity and wonder.

A key focus of the unit was using quality literature to draw connections and deepen students' understanding of the world around them. Through storytelling, they learnt to build new knowledge by linking information to familiar narratives and songs. They had many opportunities to retell stories, express their ideas and reflect on the actions and feelings of characters, developing empathetic understanding.

Several well-loved Australian texts supported this learning. Mem Fox's *Possum Magic* encouraged students to explore the importance of being seen and valued. *Kookoo Kookaburra* by Gregg Dreise highlighted kindness and respect for others. *Wombat Stew* by Marcia K Vaughan engaged students in reciting and recognising Australian animals, while also encouraging them to explore the Abbotsleigh playground in their mission to create their own 'nature stew'. *Edward the Emu* by Sheena Knowles prompted discussions about sharing responsibilities and supporting one another.

Through these rich learning experiences, students are beginning to see themselves as both learners and storytellers. They are developing an appreciation for the environment and an understanding of their role in caring for it. By combining observation, discussion and literature, Year 1 girls are building important skills that will support them in becoming empathetic, lifelong learners.

Thinking like engineers

Bluey's Toy Lab inspired our young innovators, writes Year 2 Coordinator Brittany Carrington

Our Stage 1 students stepped into the exciting world of toy design during Bluey's Toy Lab, a special learning experience led by an industry toy design expert. Through the lens of the much-loved Australian character Bluey, students explored how toys have changed over time and how technology influences the way children play.

The session supported students' HSIE learning about change and technology while also connecting to their study of Andrea Beaty's *Rosie Revere, Engineer*. Students were encouraged to think like real engineers and designers, exploring how creativity, problem-solving and innovation work together to bring ideas to life.

Using examples of Bluey toys from different stages of development, students compared early toys, such as simple soft toys and wooden play sets, with newer interactive versions featuring sounds, lights, movement and multiple functions. Through these comparisons, they discovered how advances in technology and changing interests have influenced toy design over time.

Throughout the session, students asked insightful questions about the toy industry, including how television characters become toys, what skills are needed to design toys and what future toys might look like. The toy expert shared that creativity, teamwork, curiosity and resilience are all important qualities for successful designers and engineers. Students were particularly interested to learn that most toys go through many versions before reaching the final product and that mistakes are an important part of the design process.

The learning experience concluded with a design challenge, inspiring students to create their own Bluey toy concepts back in the classroom. As they began imagining features and considering the needs of other children, students applied many of the same design-thinking skills used by professionals in the toy industry.

Bluey's Toy Lab provided a valuable opportunity for students to connect classroom learning with real-world careers and experiences. Most importantly, it encouraged them to see themselves as creative thinkers, problem-solvers and future innovators.



















Friendship Ninjas

Capybaras, known for their calm and social nature, have become a beloved mascot for teaching friendship skills, says Year 3 Coordinator Dani Salt

If you were to visit a Year 3 classroom this semester, you might notice something unusual – capybaras. Thanks to the girls, these friendly creatures have appeared in classrooms in growing numbers, with each class now home to its own army of plush capybaras. While they may seem like a fun classroom phenomenon, they have become a light-hearted reminder of something far more important – the friendships we build every day.

This semester, the Year 3 team has placed a strong focus on explicitly teaching friendship skills. Building on the language and strategies introduced through UR Strong and The Resilience Project, students have been encouraged to explore authentic friendship scenarios, develop empathy and learn practical ways to navigate the everyday challenges that naturally arise in relationships. Rather than expecting children to simply 'know' how to navigate friendships, we have been intentionally focusing on walking the walk, not just talking the talk. Through meaningful conversations, reflection and practice, students are developing the confidence to apply these skills in their everyday interactions.

Each week, the girls gather for our Friendship Ninja grade meeting, where we recognise students who have been actively demonstrating relationship-building skills and showing real courage and risk-taking. They have learnt to recognise friendship fires before they grow bigger, use quick comebacks to respond respectfully in tricky situations and consider the choices they can make to strengthen relationships. These conversations are honest, often filled with laughter and provide valuable opportunities to learn that everyone experiences friendship challenges.

The capybaras have become an unexpected mascot for this learning. Known for their calm and social nature, they remind us that friendships flourish when we choose to be inclusive, listen carefully and approach situations with empathy and care. More importantly, they have helped create a sense of identity around our friendship focus, with students enthusiastically embracing the message and making it their own.

During Friendship Day in Term 1, students engaged in collaborative experiences and shared reflection, discovering that successful friendships are not built by chance but through everyday actions and thoughtful choices.

Perhaps the greatest success has been hearing this shared language extend beyond our weekly sessions. Whether in the playground, during group work or while resolving a disagreement, students are increasingly using their Friendship Ninja skills to problem-solve when it comes to friendships. These moments remind us that the most meaningful learning is often reflected not in what students can recall but in the decisions they are making each day.

By teaching friendship with the same intention as we teach literacy or mathematics, we are helping our girls develop skills that will support them throughout their lives. Long after the capybara trend has passed, we hope the confidence to build strong, respectful relationships will remain.



Side by Side

Our Father Daughter Dinner was delightful and memorable on so many levels, writes Year 4 Coordinator Cassandra Oates

The annual Father Daughter Dinner, a hallmark of Year 4, was as much a celebration of memory-making as it was of delicious food. At the beginning of the evening, the girls excitedly welcomed their fathers and the warm hum of conversation between dads and daughters created a joyful atmosphere. Relishing the grandeur of the newly built Senior School cafeteria, the Year 4 girls demonstrated leadership and empathy as they cared for their fathers, thoughtfully introducing them to others and ensuring everyone felt included in conversation.

Marking the formal commencement of the evening, the girls gathered on the staircase and, united in their desire to make their mark, delivered a moving and heartfelt choral performance. This was followed by a beautiful dinner and a delightful performance by the Year 4 Chamber Strings ensemble, ensuring the night became truly memorable.

A reflective and engaging speech by Mr Blaine Pickering provided a poignant pause in the evening's program. With humour, poise and sincerity, Mr Pickering encouraged both fathers and daughters to consider the importance of relationships and what it means to belong to the Abbotsleigh community. A heartfelt message for all.

Another highlight of the event was the opening of letters written by the girls. This special moment left many fathers lost for words, with few dry eyes across the room. As the girls expressed their gratitude and reflected on treasured memories, they embraced the opportunity to show their fathers just how deeply they are valued.

It was a wonderfully memorable evening for all and the Year 4 girls are congratulated for the gratitude, empathy and leadership they displayed on an occasion that will be treasured by both fathers and daughters for years to come.






23





Stronger minds lead to brighter futures

By developing a positive understanding of mental health, our girls are learning how to navigate challenges, manage adversity and develop a healthy sense of self, reports Year 6 Classroom Teacher Emily McMahon

Year 6 students have been actively engaging with The Resilience Project as part of their Health program and everyday learning. This project focuses on students developing their ability to practise gratitude, empathy and mindfulness while strengthening their emotional literacy (GEM/EL). These skills play a vital role in developing character skills that will prepare our students to navigate life with compassion and confidence. By fostering self-compassion and a strong understanding of resilience, students learn how their actions create positive ripple effects within their school community and beyond.

A key focus of this semester has been to foster a culture in which students 'never admire quietly'. This has encouraged them to actively recognise and celebrate the qualities and actions they value in their peers. Opportunities for this occur in both public and private settings, as students have been supported to give spontaneous 'in-the-moment' compliments, as well as more considered acknowledgments through written reflections placed in the Admiration Jar that is shared with the class. This helps students to identify the positive traits they observe in others and builds a classroom environment grounded in kindness, appreciation and mutual respect.

From the very first week, students were introduced to weekly activities that were designed to nurture their emotional literacy. These practical, embedded tasks have become an integral part of the Year 6 routine. Each week began with a simple, yet meaningful, check-in where students shared one word that reflected how they were feeling on Monday morning. This provided valuable insight into student wellbeing and created opportunities for empathy within the classroom. It was often observed



that students demonstrated genuine care when they supported peers who may not have felt ready for the day. Through this simple task, they learnt that it is okay to not always feel okay and began to identify strategies to action self-compassion and empathy in a safe environment.

Mid-week reflections further encouraged students to practise gratitude where a prompt was provided on a whiteboard display. Students responded throughout the week to questions such as: 'What kind acts have you noticed this week?', 'What is something at home that you are grateful for?' and 'Who was there for you this week and what did they do to show you that they care?' These reflective prompts assisted them to recognise and appreciate the positive moments in their lives. By focusing on small acts of kindness and practising gratitude, students develop the ability to shift their attention from negative thinking and towards a more optimistic perspective grounded in their everyday experiences.

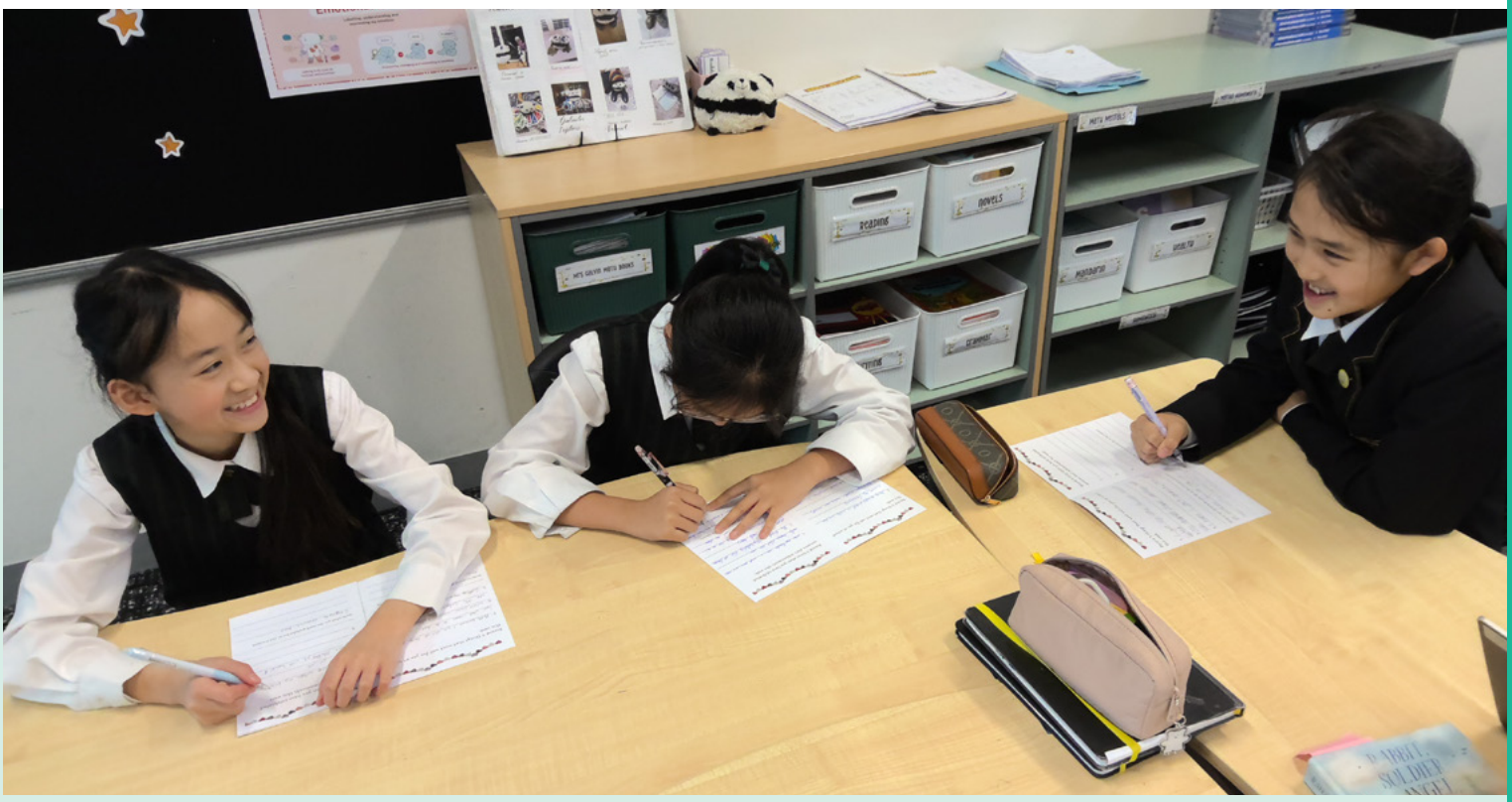
The week concluded with a Feel Good Friday challenge, where students were given a task to promote kindness and self-awareness. Challenges have included completing random acts of kindness, giving meaningful in-the-moment compliments, and identifying ways to practise self-compassion. The girls were encouraged to observe both the reactions of others and their own emotional responses to these acts. These experiences led to a growing awareness of the impact of their actions, reinforcing the idea that even the smallest of gestures can make a meaningful difference in someone's day.

To consolidate their learning, students completed a weekly reflective journal. Each journal entry was guided by a prompt that encouraged them to think deeply about how they have demonstrated gratitude, empathy, resilience or how they have practised mindfulness throughout the week. In their reflections, students were encouraged to make connections between their school experiences and their lives outside of school, helping them recognise the real-world value of these skills.

A key focus of this semester has been to foster a culture in which students 'never admire quietly'

During Term 2, The Resilience Project was integrated into both the Health and Service-Learning programs. Through a combination of individual and group tasks, students participated in hands-on learning activities, scenario analysis and participated in reflective practices. Underpinning each learning experience, they were asked to approach challenges with empathy and resilience, while encouraged to contribute positively and respectfully.

Looking ahead to Term 3, the focus on gratitude, empathy, mindfulness and emotional literacy will continue to be strengthened. These practices will remain embedded in Year 6's daily routines and across the curriculum. By building a positive view of mental health and strengthening resilience, students are becoming well-equipped to navigate challenges, manage adversity and develop a healthy sense of self in an ever-changing world.





Wellbeing

The Respectful Relationships Education initiative will help our girls build strong, respectful connections with others and foster safe, inclusive communities, writes Director of Wellbeing Liz Cannon

Our Respectful Relationships Education journey

We are delighted to share that Abbotsleigh has been successful in gaining a grant through the Independent Schools NSW (ISNSW) for the Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) project. This important initiative supports schools in strengthening students' understanding of respectful relationships, promoting positive behaviours, understanding consent and fostering safe, inclusive communities. For Abbotsleigh, this opportunity aligns powerfully with our longstanding commitment to student wellbeing, holistic education and the development of compassionate, respectful and responsible young women.

Why Respectful Relationships Education?

Respectful relationships are the foundation of healthy communities. Schools play a critical role in shaping how young people understand empathy, communication, consent and inclusion. Through the RRE project, we aim to further provide our girls with the knowledge and skills they need to build strong, respectful connections with others – both in person and online.

This work is particularly important in today's fast-changing world, where social pressures, digital communication and complex interpersonal challenges can impact young people's wellbeing. By proactively teaching these skills, we are equipping girls to both navigate relationships and to contribute positively to society.

Alignment with our Christian faith, our School Values and our Strategic Vision

Our participation in the RRE project reflects our commitment to our Christian faith and our core values of Respect, Integrity, Compassion, Courage and Perseverance. These values are lived daily in our classrooms, co-curricular activities and pastoral care systems. The initiative also directly supports key pillars of our Strategic Plan, particularly our focus on wellbeing, ethical leadership and an inclusive and connected



community. By further embedding RRE into our practices, we strengthen a culture where every student feels valued, heard and supported.

Connecting to our Wellbeing Framework

Our Wellbeing Framework places students at the centre, recognising that learning and wellbeing thrive when young people feel safe, connected and empowered. The RRE project complements this framework by adding a deeper, structured focus on relational skills and emotional intelligence. It enhances existing programs, including our Resilience Project and our PDHPE programs, by:

- Promoting respectful communication and conflict resolution
- Encouraging empathy and understanding across diverse perspectives
- Addressing issues such as bullying, discrimination and harmful behaviours
- Supporting staff with evidence-informed approaches to student wellbeing

What the RRE project involves

The project provides access to resources, training and professional learning opportunities for staff. It supports schools in reviewing current practices, identifying strengths and gaps, and developing a tailored plan to embed respectful relationships education across the school.

Key elements include:

- Deeper and more consistent curriculum integration across year levels including health, personal development and pastoral programs
- Increased student voice and participation in shaping initiatives
- Ongoing professional development for all staff to ensure consistent education
- Strengthening partnerships with families, recognising the vital role of parents and caregivers
- Ongoing evaluation and reflection

Rather than being a standalone or one-off program, RRE is designed to be woven into the fabric of school life. It is a sustained commitment to continuous improvement and cultural growth.

Looking forward

We are excited about the possibilities this project brings. By strengthening respectful relationships across our school community, we are investing in a future where our girls are not only academically capable but also emotionally intelligent, socially aware and deeply respectful of themselves and others.

We look forward to sharing updates as this journey unfolds and to working collaboratively with our girls, staff, families and Old Girls to build an even stronger, more connected community.



Freaky Friday

Comedy, emotional depth and a wealth of talent were on display in our 2026 musical production, says Head of Music Lynette Clarke

Abbotsleigh's 2026 production of *Freaky Friday* delighted audiences with its heart-warming story and catchy music, showcasing the extraordinary talent of our students both on stage and in the orchestra pit. Based on the much-loved story of a mother and daughter who magically swap bodies for a day, this Disney musical combines contemporary songs, vibrant choreography and a touching message about empathy, family and understanding.

Directed by Lee Fleming, with musical direction by Lynette Clarke and Sally Lucas, and choreography by Lauren MacKinnon, the production brought together students from Years 8–12 in a joyful celebration of music theatre. Leading the cast were Lucia (Year 12) as Katherine and Cyan (Year 10) as Ellie, whose outstanding performances captured both the comedy and emotional depth of two characters navigating life in each other's shoes. Their work was supported by a talented ensemble whose enthusiasm, commitment and stage presence brought every scene to life.

Throughout the rehearsal process, students demonstrated resilience, creativity and exceptional teamwork. Whether performing, playing in the orchestra, managing or assisting behind the scenes, every student contributed to the success of the show. Their willingness to embrace challenges with positivity and dedication reflected the spirit of the musical itself and exemplified the best of Abbotsleigh's performing arts culture.








GH SCHOOL








FREAKY








GH SCHOOL





Team **Abbotsleigh**

This year has seen outstanding sporting achievements from girls across our Junior and Senior Schools but, as Senior School Director of Sports Dale Berg notes, it's not just about winning, it's about fostering confidence, teamwork, leadership and resilience



Sport continues to flourish at Abbotsleigh, providing students with meaningful opportunities to pursue their passions and represent the School with pride. Across a range of sporting disciplines, our students have demonstrated exceptional commitment and skill, achieving remarkable success at local, state, national and even international levels. These experiences not only support individual growth and the wellbeing of our students but also strengthen the vibrant culture of participation and excellence that defines sport at Abbotsleigh, both in the Junior and Senior Schools.

This year has been marked by outstanding achievements across many sports. Among the highlights in our Senior School, Abbotsleigh teams celebrated a 1st place finish in the IGSA Cross Country Championships, 2nd place in Tildesley Tennis, 4th place in IGSA Diving and 5th place in IGSA Swimming. These results reflect the dedication of our students and coaches, as well as the strength of our training and development programs.

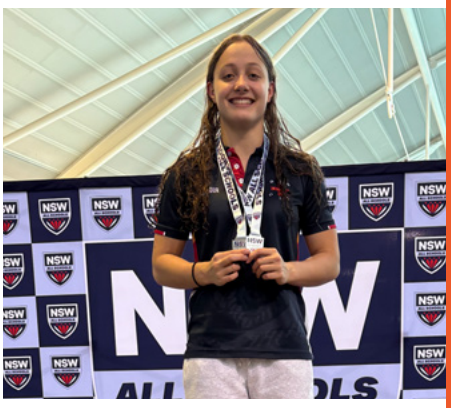
Our commitment to performance opportunities has continued through specialist training camps in Melbourne and the Gold Coast. Students participating in tennis, swimming, athletics and cross country camps benefited from access to elite facilities, expert coaching and valuable competitive experiences, all designed to support their ongoing development.

Individual student achievements have also been cause for celebration, with extensive representative honours. Twenty-nine of our Senior School girls were IGSA Representatives across hockey, netball, diving, basketball, cross country and swimming; 11 girls were NSWCIS Representatives in cross country, netball, cricket and swimming; and two of our students were representatives at All Schools level. We have again qualified for the NSW High School Tennis Championships as one of the leading tennis schools in the state.

Beyond the schoolgirl pathway opportunities, our girls are showcasing exceptional talent and achieving impressive performances. Harper (Year 8) achieved success at the SSA Triathlon Championships, securing 2nd place in the Aquathlon event and contributing to the NSW Mixed Team Relay team. Emilie (Year 11) continued to excel in tennis, competing at the Australian













Open Junior Championships. Andelaine (Year 7), Charlize (Year 10) and Mara (Year 11) qualified for the Australian Interschools Equestrian Championships, after outstanding results at recent interschools events. Elizabeth (Year 8) won both the Under 15s and Under 17s State Titles in squash; and Daisy (Year 11) continued to excel in table tennis after being selected for the 2026 International Table Tennis Federation Oceania Youth Championships in September and also selected in the Australian team for the Youth Olympics, while Josie (Year 7) along with Lucia (Year 4) were named Champions at the NSW Secondary Schoolgirls Cup for Table Tennis. Claire (Year 8) was selected in the NSW Water Polo Academy where her team placed an incredible second overall. Claire and Hazel (Year 8) were also members of the NSW Rhythmic Gymnastics team that medalled at the recent Nationals. Joselyn (Year 10) shines in gymnastics, being selected for Australia in Rhythmic Gymnastics. Ginger (Year 10) was selected in the Australian Girls Rugby U16 Merit Team, recognising her talent on the national stage, while Audrey Jackson (Year 12) claimed the title of National Swimming Champion Also, Lily (Year 10) was selected as the NSW representative for the ILCA 4 Australian and Oceania Championships

Equestrian riders and snowsports competitors across the Junior School and Senior School enjoyed another successful season of competition, with strong performances at representative events, continuing Abbotsleigh's proud tradition in these sports. At the Northern NSW Championships, Amelia (Year 10), Allison (Year 8) and Michelle (Year 5) collected gold for events in Alpine and SkierX; with Adele (Year 6) gaining silver in Alpine and Isabella (Year 4) attaining bronze in SkierX. In addition, Abbotsleigh teams won six golds, seven silvers and two bronze in snowsports events (see table on the next page).

In equestrian events, our students represented the school exceptionally well, competing across a wide range of disciplines and achieving outstanding results. In particular, we congratulate Andelaine (Year 7), Josephine and Lucy (both Year 9), Charlize and Sabrina (both Year 10), Mara (Year 11) and Minna Poole (Year 12) for some amazing performances.

The strength and depth of our sporting program extends well beyond the Senior School, with our Junior School also celebrating many individual and team best performances. From claiming NSWPSSA Senior Girls Relay Championship honours in swimming to winning team titles at both IPSHA and NSWCIS Cross Country in the 8/9-year and 10-year age groups, our students have demonstrated exceptional skill, determination and teamwork. Individual excellence was also on display, with Year 4's Elena crowned NSWCIS Cross Country Under 10 Champion and Year 3's Ella placing second in the 8/9 years division. These results reflect not only outstanding performances, but also the strength of our sporting program and the exciting future that lies ahead for our young athletes. From the Junior School, we had two IPSHA Representatives in diving; 13 in cross country; six in swimming; one in touch football; and two in football. Similarly, in NSWCIS, Abbotsleigh had two Representatives in cross country; five in swimming; three in cricket; and two in hockey. In NSWPSSA, Abbotsleigh Junior School girls were Representatives in swimming, cricket, hockey and tennis

We also congratulate our Abbotsleigh Old Girls on their extraordinary achievements, as they serve as inspiration to aspiring athletes across the School: Rosie Fordham (2020), Australian Winter Olympic Games competitor in Cross Country Skiing; Kiana Elliott (2014) – Australian Commonwealth Games competitor in Weightlifting; Georgia Fichardt (2022) – Australian Under 23 Oceania team for Athletics; Zoe Woods (2025) – Competitor at the World Under 20 Championships in Race Walking; and Adelaide Sylvester (2020) – Australian Open Women's Touch Football team member.







Beyond results and representative honours, sport at Abbotsleigh continues to play a vital role in fostering confidence, teamwork, leadership and resilience. The willingness of students to challenge themselves, support one another, and strive for personal bests remains one of the program's greatest strengths. Participation in sports and in team events have a lasting effect no matter what career paths our girls choose to take after they leave school. In this issue of *Around Abbotsleigh*, four former head prefects all reference the effect team sports – from primary school to Year 12 – had on developing their leadership skills. Also in this issue, Old Girl Steph Chen (1995), founder and CEO of not-for-profit organisation SEE Together, attributes her competitive drive to foundations that were laid on the sports fields of Abbotsleigh.

The continued growth of sport at Abbotsleigh has been supported through key staff appointments. This year we welcomed Seamus Rodden as Head of Senior School Sport and Alison Broadbent as Sport Coordinator and Head of Netball. A former Australian Diamonds netball player, Alison brings a wealth of elite sporting experience to the School. We also recognise staff members Michelle Penn, Aidan Baker and Jordan Davies for their involvement in NSWCIS hockey, cricket and AFL programs as a member of their respective coaching teams. Together, their expertise and leadership have made a significant contribution to the development and performance of our sporting programs.

As we reflect on another successful year, we celebrate not only the medals, selections and championships, but also the enthusiasm and sportsmanship demonstrated by students across all levels of participation. Whether competing on the national stage or representing the School for the first time, every student contributes to the strong sporting culture that continues to make Abbotsleigh a place where excellence and opportunity thrive.

Going for gold (and silver and bronze)

The following snowsports teams received a place-getting medal

Division 2 SkierX – Gold

Division 4 Alpine – Gold

Division 4 SnowboardGS – Gold

Division 4 SnowboardX – Gold

Division 6 Alpine – Gold

Division 6 SkierX – Gold

Division 2 Alpine – Silver

Division 2 SnowboardGS – Silver

Division 2 SnowboardX – Silver

Division 3 Alpine – Silver

Division 4 SkierX – Silver

Division 5 Alpine – Silver

Division 5 SkierX – Silver

Division 3 SkierX – Bronze

Division 6 SkierX – Bronze

In Plumbing and Poetry of Leadership, ***p 37****, four former head prefects remember team sports as important activities and crucial to honing their leadership skills.*

For the fascinating history of the Tildesley Shield, see our Archivist's article on ***p 38****.*

Steph Chen's global vision has restored sight to many. Her story is on ***p 48****.*











You Can Sit with Me

Abbotsleigh is proud to introduce this Tier 1 preventative program that aims to develop a culture of kindness and prevent bullying, reports Head of Middle School Clare Haymen

Positive relationships are the heartbeat of a healthy school community. When students feel connected, respected and supported, they're more likely to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Middle School can be a time of uncertainty, where friendship groups shift, identities evolve and emotions run high. This is why building strong relationships and preventing bullying isn't just helpful, it's essential.

A school culture built on kindness and respect naturally reduces the likelihood of bullying as students learn to display compassion and empathy. This year, we have been proud to introduce You Can Sit with Me in Year 7.

YCSWM is an evidence-based, peer-led program that fosters kindness and belonging, preventing exclusion and bullying and is recognised by the Australian government as a Tier 1 preventive program. The program has been formally acknowledged in Australia's National Anti-Bullying Rapid Review for its contribution to fostering positive school cultures and strengthening communities. The review (announced on 16 February 2025) recommends a prevention focus to actively minimise the risk of bullying and 'includes clear behavioural expectations and actions to nurture a safe, inclusive and respectful school culture'. At Abbotsleigh, we do this through the promotion and embodiment of our School Values, as well as developmentally appropriate education on respectful relationships, social and emotional learning and digital safety.

Our first group of Year 7 YCSWM ambassadors has been modelling positive behaviours in the playground, promoting kindness, inclusion and belonging. Week 7 of Term 1 saw the launch of Friendship Week, with girls participating in friendship-bracelet-making and games. It culminated in the national You Can Sit with Me Day on Friday 5 June. Our ambassadors sold yellow ribbons to promote friendship and ran activities on the plaza area, with all funds going towards our Bunda Girls' Secondary School sponsorship. It was wonderful to watch girls across the Senior School interacting in such a joyful way.

Looking ahead, we are excited to watch this shared commitment shape our hallways, classrooms and our relationships, turning everyday moments into opportunities to support each other and connect with genuine respect.

Learning beyond the classroom

The week-long Work Experience program for Year 10s is an invaluable opportunity, writes Vivienne Gilkes, our Head of Career Education and Post-School Opportunities

In May, Year 10 students participated in the Work Experience program, an important component of career education at Abbotsleigh. Across the week, students stepped away from their usual routines and into a wide variety of workplaces, gaining firsthand insight into professional environments and expectations.

Students participated in more than 200 placements across a diverse range of industries, including health, law, business, education, engineering and the creative sectors. Of particular note was the continued support of our parent community, with more than 60 placements offered by current and past Abbotsleigh families.

At this stage of their education, work experience is less about confirming a career path and more about broadening the students' understanding of the world of work. For many, it is their first experience in a professional setting. They are required to adapt to unfamiliar environments, communicate with new people and approach tasks with initiative and independence. These experiences play an important role in building confidence and encouraging a greater sense of self-awareness.

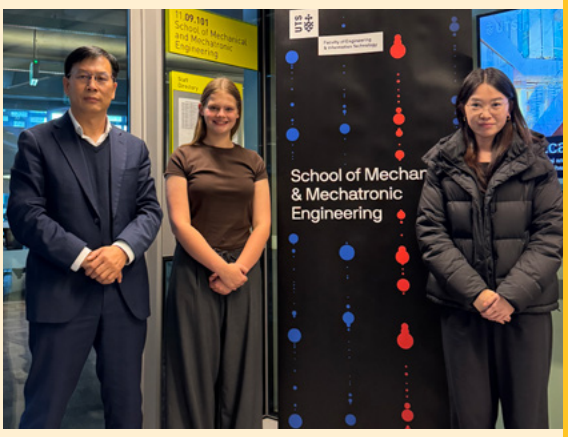
Throughout the week, students developed key employability skills that cannot be fully replicated in the classroom. They observed how teams function, saw how problems are approached in real time and began to understand the importance of reliability, organisation and clear communication. Just as importantly, they were able to reflect on what they enjoyed, what challenged them – and what surprised them.

Work experience also provides an early introduction to professional relationships. By engaging with colleagues and supervisors, students begin to appreciate the value of networking, mentorship and workplace etiquette. These interactions often leave a lasting impression and help students feel more prepared for future opportunities.

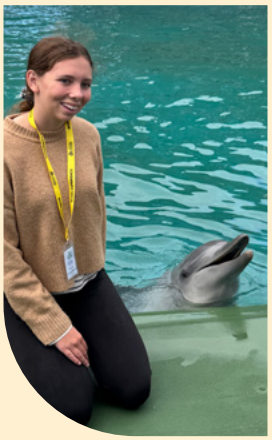
We are very grateful to the many organisations and families who gave their time to host our students. Looking ahead, we warmly encourage any members of the Abbotsleigh community who may be able to host a student in May 2027 to consider becoming involved in the program. Offering a placement is a practical and generous way to support the next generation as they begin to explore their future pathways.

For further information about the Year 10 Work Experience Program or to express interest in hosting a student, please contact Vivienne Gilkes, Head of Career Education & Post-School Opportunities: **gilkesv@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au**













Year 8 Languages Day



Chinese

Our Chinese Incursion Day was an enjoyable and invaluable experience. We had the opportunity to learn Tai Chi from a professional Tai Chi master, which was a unique and hands-on experience as we practised various movements with our friends while gaining insight into an important aspect of Chinese culture. One of the highlights of the day was enjoying traditional Chinese food and snacks while watching a Chinese film, which enhanced our understanding of the language in an entertaining and immersive way. We sampled delicious dumplings as well as a variety of Chinese snacks, including spicy konjac and crackers. Overall, it was a fantastic day filled with culture, learning and delicious food, and I thoroughly enjoyed exploring a different aspect of Chinese culture with my classmates.

Enya (Year 8)







French

The French Languages Day was definitely a highlight of the year. Students got to improve their speaking skills as well as engaging with French culture. The day started with breakfast; there were *pains au chocolat* and *madeleines. Miam miam!* The girls were then split into two groups: *'J'ai faim'*, meaning I am hungry, and *'J'ai soif'*, meaning I am thirsty. In these groups, we learnt more about French culture. We explored how to separate French stereotypes and came up with authentic and unique aspects of the French culture through fun group games. We also learnt about the amazing cuisine such as escargot and boeuf bourguignon as well as important monuments such as the Palace of Versailles and the Louvre.

After recess, it was time for the much-anticipated singing competitions. During the term we got together as classes to prepare a song in French that matched the vocabulary and its focus on food. We had to come up with costumes and choreography to the song as well as learn the lyrics with the correct pronunciation. Ms Haymen was the amazing guest judge who scored us on various aspects of performance. In the end, it was a very competitive competition with the classes performing confidently and enthusiastically but French 3 won the day, wowing the audience with their synchronised choreography and unique props. It was an exciting and memorable way to end the day and a great way to practise our French pronunciation.

Overall, Languages Day was a great opportunity for girls to connect and have fun while embracing the French culture.

Anika and Emma (Year 8)

Latin

In June, the Year 8 Latin students had the wonderful privilege of visiting the Chau Chak Wing Museum to learn about ancient Roman history and culture. Spirits high and awaiting the enjoyable day ahead, we hopped on the buses to the University of Sydney. Upon our arrival, our teachers Dr Hartwig and Dr McVeigh offered us a quick tour of the beautiful university campus, and we had the chance to walk through the 'graffiti tunnel', which was exactly what its name suggested: a tunnel full of graffiti. Some of us signed our names and, after a quick break for treats, we came to the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

Our guide pointed out priceless artefacts and the origins and inscriptions on each. We observed these, a notable one being a hugely oversized krater, a two-handled vessel used by the ancient Greeks to mix wine with water. We were informed that this originally had not been pieced together correctly, a testament to how much history changes over time with technological advancements. Other relics we examined were funeral stones with Latin inscriptions, a rare chance to use our knowledge of the language, demonstrating our progress in class. Unlike other modern languages, this was a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between textbook translations and the physical remnants of the ancient world.

In the next room, we were able to take this connection even further. Imagine being able to hold an object that was used by people thousands of years ago. In the 'hands-on' room at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, that's exactly what we got to do: interact with tools, sculptures and items from the ancient past. In the room, we saw a carefully curated array of objects: an intricately detailed bowl, a strange canopic jar with the lid in the shape of an animal's head, a wooden amulet that looked like a scarab beetle... just to name a few. Our guide instructed us to analyse each object and estimate its age, where it originated, what its purpose was and other key factors that would help us understand its value. We even had the opportunity to look at two ancient swords, which were passed around, one of which was used in a real battle!

By now it was time to come back to school but, despite this, our wonderful teachers Dr McVeigh and Dr Hartwig, kindly prepared an engaging session of trivia, which ultimately allowed us to expand our knowledge of the Roman Empire, challenging us to remember key dates and figures from the time. Through this activity we had the opportunity to collaborate with our peers, ending the day with a high note full of pizza and celebrations. Furthermore, the trivia prompted us to consider the broader legacy of the Roman Empire, including its influence on systems of government, language and urban development across Europe and beyond. By revisiting these concepts, we strengthened our understanding of the ways in which the Roman world has shaped contemporary civilisation.

We're certain that the knowledge and insight we gained from this highly enjoyable excursion will last us a lifetime. Thank you to our teachers who put together such an exciting trip!

Sankavi, Lakshi and Elaine (Year 8)









Building hands, minds and futures

An ambitious iSTEM project gave Year 9 students insight into technologies shaping our world, from robotics and automation to biomedical engineering. By Senior School Science Teacher Michelle Gouveia

What happens when biology, engineering, coding and creativity come together? In Year 9 iSTEM, students discovered the answer by taking on one of their most ambitious projects yet: designing and building a robotic hand that could mimic the movements of a human hand.

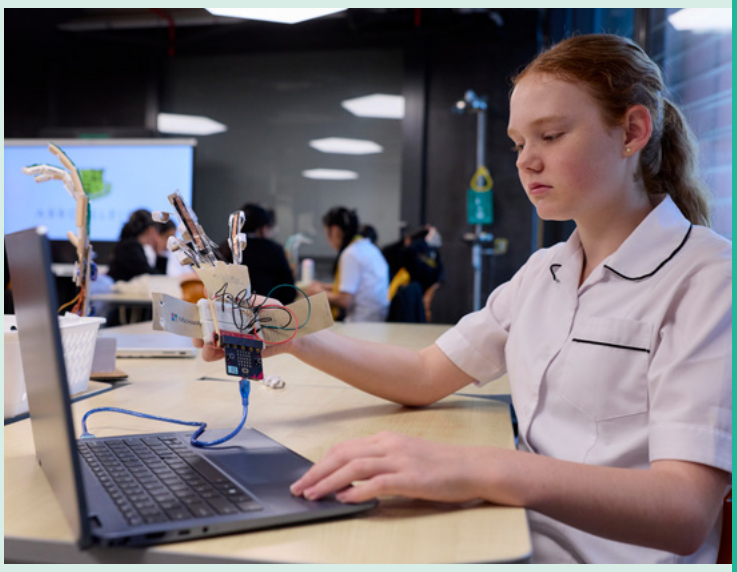
Before building a single component, students explored the remarkable anatomy of the human hand, investigating how joints, ligaments, muscles and tendons work together to create movement. Armed with this understanding, they set out to recreate these movements using technology.

The challenge was far from simple. Working in collaborative teams, students designed and built a robotic hand crafted from straws and fishing line, engineered to replicate the intricate movements of human fingers. They paired this with a wearable glove fitted with flex sensors capable of detecting not only which finger was bent, but also how far it had bent. Using micro:bits, coding and wireless communication, students programmed the system so the robotic hand could respond directly to the wearer's finger movements.

The real magic happened when they programmed the microcontrollers to communicate. Information from the glove was transmitted to a micro:bit, sent via radio channels to a second micro:bit attached to the robotic hand, and translated into movement by servo motors. The result was a robotic hand that mirrored the wearer's movements in real time.

While this sounds impressive on paper, making it work consistently was another matter entirely! Students quickly discovered there were countless points in the process where something could go wrong. Was the flex sensor detecting the movement correctly? Was that data







being transmitted accurately? Had the radio signal been received? Was the code interpreting the information as intended? Were the motors wired correctly? Were the robotic fingers moving in the correct sequence and with the appropriate range of motion? Finding answers required patience, persistence and methodical problem-solving.

Every successful movement of the robotic hand represented hours of testing, debugging and teamwork, making each breakthrough more rewarding. Throughout the project, students demonstrated remarkable resilience. Rather than becoming discouraged when systems failed, they learnt to troubleshoot, test, analyse and refine their designs. Teams developed strategies for identifying where signals were being lost and worked collaboratively to overcome each challenge they encountered. Success rarely came on the first attempt but each setback became an opportunity to learn.

One of the project's greatest strengths was the way it encouraged students to play to their individual strengths while working towards a shared goal. Some excelled in coding, others in construction and design, while others emerged as outstanding communicators and organisers. Through collaboration, students learnt that the most innovative solutions often emerge when diverse skillsets and perspectives come together.

Beyond the impressive robotic hands, students developed the capabilities that will serve them well throughout their future studies and careers: critical thinking, communication, creativity, teamwork and perseverance. They also gained insight into technologies shaping our world, from robotics and automation to biomedical engineering and assistive technologies. Most importantly, they experienced what real engineers, programmers and designers encounter every day: complex problems that require curiosity, determination and collaboration to solve.

While the robotic hands were an exciting achievement, the most valuable outcome was watching our students grow into resilient learners, creative thinkers and confident problem-solvers. Through this project, they gained a glimpse into the world of engineering and robotics while developing the collaboration, communication and critical-thinking skills that will support them well beyond the classroom.

In iSTEM, we are not just building robots. We are building the innovators of the future.



ABBOTSLEIGH FOUNDATION

Supporting academic excellence

Each year, generous members of our school community celebrate excellence by endowing a Speech Day prize.

Endowing a prize is a meaningful way to:

- Recognise and inspire student achievement
- Honour your daughter's or granddaughter's Abbotsleigh journey
- Support an area of learning you are passionate about
- Give back to a community that means so much

A gift of **$1,000** to the Abbotsleigh Foundation endows a prize for five years.

A gift of **$5,000** to the Abbotsleigh Foundation endows a prize in perpetuity – with the option to name your prize.

Please note that prize endowment gifts are not tax-deductible.

> *'Endowing an Abbotsleigh prize honours your daughter's time at the School and is a lasting legacy of her Abbotsleigh journey. By supporting the Abbotsleigh Foundation, you give back to a community committed to nurturing confident, capable and exemplary young women.'*
> **Tracy Le, Year 8 parent**

If you are interested in endowing a prize, please contact

Ella Toll, Fundraising Manager, at **foundation@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au** or +61 2 9473 7774.

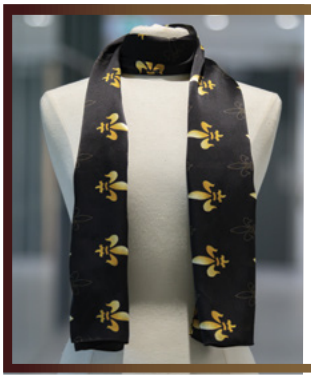
Prizes available for endowment

Junior School

- Citizenship in Year 1
- French Award in Year 4
- Margaret Read Prize for Citizenship and Effort in Year 4
- Science Award in Year 6

Senior School

- Academic Achievement in Year 8
- Creative Writing in Year 10
- Agriculture in Year 12
- Business Studies in Year 12
- Chinese Context in Year 12
- Design and Technology in Year 12
- AL/D in Year 12
- English Standard in Year 12
- Mathematics Standard in Year 12



Marian Clarke Society

Back and Gold 100% Silk scarf

$100

Celebrate 140 years of Abbotsleigh with this **limited edition Black and Gold commemorative scarf**
– a timeless tribute to Abbotsleigh's proud legacy of empowering young women
All proceeds to go towards means-tested scholarships

Purchases can be made by scanning the QR code



Former head prefects, from left: Anjali Lambotharan (2022), Lily Thornthwaite (2024) and Emma Thornthwaite (2021).

Plumbing and Poetry of Leadership

In our Professional Learning Groups, we interviewed former Abbotsleigh head prefects to see how their education shaped their leadership. By Head of English Georgia Black

'A leader is anyone, regardless of title or position, who holds themselves accountable for finding potential in people and ideas, and who has the courage to develop that potential' – Brené Brown, Strong Ground (2025)

Abbotsleigh's Centre of Professional Excellence celebrated the formation of 12 staff-led Professional Learning Groups (PLGs), fostering collaboration between staff across the Junior and Senior School campuses as they engage with evidence-informed research. The PLGs leverage the collective expertise of Abbotsleigh staff across all career stages, promoting reflective practice as a foundation for sustained professional growth, collaboration and excellence in teaching and learning.

Drawing on Brené Brown's research[1], the PLG Plumbing and Poetry of Leadership has explored values-based leadership and the importance of leading authentically. The group has examined how both staff and girls develop their leadership identity, considering the role of relationships alongside formal and informal experiences, in shaping identity formation and influencing leadership practice.

Keen to conduct qualitative research, we were thrilled to interview former Abbotsleigh head prefects about the experiences and relationships that shaped their leadership identity and leadership journey. Emma Thornthwaite (2021), Anjali Lambotharan (2022), Phoebe Luu (2023, who participated via Zoom from Brisbane) and Lily Thornthwaite (2024) generously shared reflections on their unique leadership experiences and the meaningful relationships that supported, challenged and encouraged them along the way.

One of the most consistent themes across the interviews was the girls' deep respect and gratitude for the Abbotsleigh staff who had influenced and supported their leadership development. Former dean of Senior School, Mrs Annette Ware, was repeatedly described as wise, calm, highly influential and deeply supportive. Phoebe also reflected that 'teachers not directly involved in formal leadership activities were really important', with tutors, in particular, identified as valued role models whose guidance and encouragement helped shape their leadership journeys.

Another educative experience informing the girls' leadership identity was the role of team sports. A 2023 Deloitte study[2] of high-earning professionals indicates that 85% of women in leadership roles say the skills they developed playing sports at school were important to success in their professional careers. Our former head prefects all identified team sports, right from primary school, as crucial to developing their leadership skills and were important activities that they maintained, especially during Year 12.

We are deeply grateful to Emma, Anjali, Phoebe and Lily for sharing their time and offering valuable insights into the ways Abbotsleigh has contributed to the development of their leadership identity. We remain immensely proud of these exceptional young women and the legacy they leave as compassionate, authentic and articulate leaders, whose impact extends far beyond their time at Abbotsleigh.

References

1. Brown, B. (2025). Strong ground: The lessons of daring leadership, the tenacity of paradox, and the wisdom of the human spirit. Random House.

2. Lipscombe, K., Tindall-Ford, S., & Kidson, P. (2025). Developing a personalized educational leadership theory: A promising approach to school leader development? Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 20(1), 59-79. http://doi.org.10.1177/19427751241245971

Anyone for tennis?

Abbotsleigh Archivist Natasha Neal tells the fascinating history of our tennis legacy and our ongoing participation – and success – in the Tildesley Shield

The Tildesley Shield was first held in 1918 and is the oldest school tennis competition in Australia. For more than a century it has provided generations of schoolgirls with the opportunity to compete, represent their school and build lifelong friendships through sport.

Before the introduction of the Tildesley Shield, interschool tennis competitions for girls were organised by the Secondary School Tennis Association, established in 1903. In that year, Abbotsleigh girls travelled from Wahroonga to compete against schools including Ascham, Kambala, Normanhurst, PLC Croydon, Riviere and CEGGS (now SCEGGS). The journey was no small undertaking. At the time, the train line terminated at Milsons Point, where girls transferred to a ferry and then a tram to reach their destination. The distance proved too difficult and Miss Clarke withdrew Abbotsleigh from the competition in its first year.

Miss Evelyn Tildesley (1882-1976)

The shield takes its name from Miss Evelyn Mary Tildesley, headmistress of the now closed Normanhurst, Ashfield. A scholar of the classics and a passionate educator, she worked closely with Ellen Clarke, the founder and headmistress of Normanhurst, who was also Marian Clarke's sister. Evelyn Tildesley became headmistress of Normanhurst in 1914. Like the Clarke sisters, Evelyn believed in the importance of a well-rounded education for girls, encouraging both academic learning and physical activity.

Miss Tildesley donated a 'beautiful oak and bronze shield' in 1918 to encourage a tennis competition between the girls' schools. Her vision was that tennis should foster teamwork, school spirit and participation.

Henry Marsh, an experienced player and administrator of Australian tennis, was a key figure in the establishment of the Tildesley Shield. He described the shield as '...the most coveted trophy in school tennis because it teaches girls to play for their school rather than for themselves, its special value lying in the fact that at least 12 girls, with a maximum of 32, according to the number of players over 12 years of age, compete for the trophy, thereby giving a number of the girls an opportunity of representing their School, which they would not otherwise get until much later.'

The Tildesley Shield was awarded not to individual champions but to the school with the highest percentage



MISS E. M. TILDESLEY.
1914 - 1923.

THE WEAVER.

July 21st—Abbotsleigh A lost to P.L.C., Pymble, A, 1-7 sets, 26-45 games; and defeated the B 5-3 sets, 37-33 games. Compared with last year these results are not quite so satisfactory. During the first round, when the matches were played in doubles, the results were quite good, but in the second round—the singles matches—the A team lost all but one match. However, in the results for the year, the A team was placed third and the B team second.

Tildesley Shield.

For the first time in the history of Abbotsleigh, the School took part this year in the Tildesley Shield. The team consisted of six pairs of doubles and twelve singles players. Abbotsleigh came ninth out of nineteen schools with 49.2%, and the girls are to be congratulated on doing so well. We should also like to congratulate Ascham on winning the Shield for 1928.

The Weaver, 1928.

THE WEAVER

dition of being placed amongst the first 100. It is gratifying to know that two of our girls were thus placed, and that Helen Browne gained first place in the State for Botany.

The Margaret Murray Prize, awarded for the School's best Intermediate pass, went to Judith Stephens, the Arthur W. Crane Memorial Prize for History to Adrienne Goldring, and the Ada McIlrath Prize for the best Leaving Certificate pass to Helen Browne, who was also awarded the Marian Clarke Scholarship tenable for three years at the University.

GAMES AND PHYSICAL CULTURE.

Games and Physical Culture form an essential part of the School training and the sports record has been unusually good. Friendly matches with other schools have been played in hockey, basketball and tennis. Once again our basketball team has gone through the season undefeated, and the standard of the tennis has continued to improve. This year, for the first time in the history of the School, our tennis team succeeded in winning the coveted Tildesley Shield. Swimming continues at the Olympic Pool, and a large number of girls are working for the Life-Saving Certificate.

The Weaver, July 1939, G Gordon Everett Headmistress Report, 13 December 1938.



Daily Mirror, 19 September 1953.

Tildesley Tennis

Abbotsleigh Had First Shield Win

By M. HENRY MARSH

Abbotsleigh School won the Tildesley Shield yesterday for the first time.

Pat Searl was mainly responsible for Ascham's fourth placing. Yesterday she defeated Pat Fisher, an outstanding junior. J. Anderson, B. Merchant, and T. Proctor, in succession.

Following is the result:—

School	Won	Lost	Total	P.C.
Abbotsleigh	392	287	680	57.6
SCEGGS	324	273	597	54.27
Claremont	137	116	253	54.19
Ascham	378	326	704	53.69
PLC	322	281	603	53.39
Wenona	234	226	460	50.86
Meriden	216	209	425	50.82
Normanhurst	85	91	176	48.2
Kambala	148	161	309	47.8
Redlands	75	83	158	47.4
Queenwood	80	89	169	47.3
St. Catherine's	106	127	233	45.4
Croydon	174	213	387	45.01
Pymble	186	232	418	44.4
Ravenswood	77	107	184	41.8
Brighton	63	100	163	38.6
North Sydney	57	94	151	37.7
Cremorne	43	81	124	34.6

Normanhurst has won the shield eight times since 1918, Ascham 7, Ravenswood 3, Claremont 2, and Abbotsleigh 1.

The Sun, 23 October 1938.



Diana Bourke (captain of the team in 1938) is pictured with the Tildesley Shield – it must have been straight after the competition as Abbotsleigh's name isn't yet on the shield!

of games won across the competition. The format ensured that many girls had the opportunity to represent their school, reinforcing the values of teamwork and collective achievement that continue to define the competition today.

Abbotsleigh and Tildesley

Abbotsleigh joined the Tildesley Shield competition in 1928. The tournament was played at the famous White City Tennis Club at Rushcutters Bay. The 1928 *Weaver* records how Abbotsleigh finished ninth out of 19 schools and was congratulated for its strong performance. Success soon followed: in 1938, Abbotsleigh won our first Tildesley Shield.

The 1950s became a golden era, with the School claiming the shield in 1952, 1953, 1954, 1957 and 1958. These successes were built on a strong culture of competition and commitment within the school tennis program. Former student Suzanne Dowsett (Hemmingway, 1956), recalled in 1956: 'We had a tennis squad. We played each afternoon after school and had to challenge to be in the team. Anyone could challenge anyone else. We were coached by Miss Palmer; she was very strict and although she did not show much emotion, she had a great desire to win.'

The missing shield

During the 1970s, Abbotsleigh enjoyed a particularly successful period in the Tildesley competition, claiming the shield on numerous occasions. However, late in 1976, an unexpected incident occurred when the Tildesley Shield disappeared from the wall of the Abbotsleigh Assembly Hall. The loss was reported to police and advertisements were placed in newspapers appealing for its return. It was believed that the disappearance was the result of a prank from a neighbouring school or university colleges but the shield was never recovered.

An interim shield was used from 1976 until 1986, when the Association of Heads of the Independent Girls Schools of NSW commissioned a replacement. Drawing on photographs supplied by participating schools, craftsmen recreated the shield as closely as possible to the original oak and bronze design.

The original Tildesley Shield was never recovered and its disappearance remains a mystery.

Changes to competition

By the 1980s, the Tildesley Shield had begun to evolve while remaining true to the values established by its founder, Miss Evelyn Tildesley. One of the most significant changes was the move from the White City courts. In 1983, the competition was relocated to Eastwood Thornleigh District Tennis Association courts at the Pennant Hills Sporting Complex, where it continues to be played today.

The introduction of seeding in 1984 ensured a stronger competition and more balanced matches. The change followed years of discussion and negotiation, as organisers were keen to ensure that any modernisation respected Miss Tildesley's original vision of tennis as a team-based competition that encouraged school spirit.

Tildesley across generations of Abbotsleigh girls

The story of the Tildesley Shield at Abbotsleigh is preserved in photographs, postcards, newspaper clippings, *Weaver* reports, uniforms, trophies, treasured dolls and the memories of the generations of players. Each generation has woven its own distinctive thread through every serve, rally, volley or smash. Some threads tell of championships won, others tell of challenges to overcome and many others tell of life-long friendships and the joy of representing Abbotsleigh.


Judith Solomon of Abbotsleigh puts plenty of action into her service during the Tildesley Shield series at White City today.

SOUTHS HELD

Daily Mirror, 20 September 1952.


Tildesley Team 1958.


Abbotsleigh dolls, showing the 1995-2001 Tildesley Tennis uniform (left); the 2005 Tildesley Tennis uniform (right). Uniforms created by Abbotsleigh teacher Mrs Lesley Sykes.


1971 Tildesley Tennis.



From the President of the **Abbotsleigh Parents' Association**

Some periods are defined by one big moment. Others, like this one, are defined by a string of smaller ones that add up to something bigger. Looking back over the first two terms of 2026, that's exactly how I'd describe it: a steady accumulation of small, generous acts that together tell the story of what the APA is really about.

We started the year at the Junior School, with Cinema Under the Stars on the Oval in March. Picnic blankets spread out across the grass, girls settling in as the sun went down and each year group running its own stall to raise funds along the way – face painting, cupcakes and everything in between. Together, the stalls raised $6,113.14, a wonderful result and a lovely example of what happens when families pitch in.

In May, parents came together for our Heroes and Villains-themed Trivia Night, always one of the highlights of the APA calendar. This year we held it in the new Senior School cafeteria, an amazing facility, and had record attendance with more than 200 people through the door. The night raised $4319 for the APA, funds that go straight back into supporting initiatives across the School. To everyone who came along and made it such a memorable evening: thank you!

Perhaps the development I'm proudest of from these first two terms is the launch of Abbotsleigh Circle of Care, a practical meal support program for Abbotsleigh families going through a challenging time. A group of volunteer parents now cook and deliver meals when they're needed, with confidentiality and respect for the recipient family built into how it runs. It's well and truly up and running, and it has already made a real difference to families who needed it. There's no roster or minimum commitment; volunteers simply put their name down and are called on when the need arises. If you'd like to volunteer or you know a family who could use some support, please do get in touch.

We've also made a smaller, more practical contribution: a new bubbler outside the cafeteria at the Senior School. It's not glamorous but it's the kind of thing that gets used every single day, by every single student, and that's exactly the sort of investment the APA likes to make – useful, visible and appreciated by the girls themselves.

The Abbotsleigh APA Indigenous Mural Project, led in collaboration with First Nations students and Creative Arts Prefects, has commenced, with an artist-in-residence working alongside students to create a lasting visual celebration of First Nations art and culture. We are also funding a much-needed upgrade to the Drama department's costume and props storage, giving students better facilities to prepare for exams and performances.

If you've helped in any capacity this year so far, please know it mattered. If you haven't yet, we'd love to have you; even an hour here or there makes a real difference. There's no expectation of doing everything – we'd just welcome whatever time you're able to give.

If you'd like to know more about any of our initiatives, or you're wondering how to get more involved, please reach out to the APA directly at **apapresident@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au**. We'd genuinely love to hear from you. To everyone who has contributed this year so far, in ways big and small: thank you for making Abbotsleigh feel like the community it is.

Liz Rayment
President of the APA









From the Presidents of the **Abbotsleigh Boarder Parents' Association**

One of the greatest strengths of the Abbotsleigh Boarding community is the strong partnership that exists between families, the School and the Abbotsleigh Boarder Parents' Association (ABPA). Throughout the year, the ABPA has continued to focus on its core purpose of fostering connection, supporting boarding families and creating opportunities for our community to come together.

Boarding is a unique journey, not only for our daughters but also for parents and families. Whether welcoming families who are new to boarding or reconnecting with those who have been part of our community for many years, the ABPA aims to ensure every family feels supported, informed and connected.

This year has seen a wonderful range of opportunities for parents to build relationships, including our Boarder Parent Social at Mosman Rowers, year-level catch-ups organised by our Year Representatives, and regional gatherings held alongside boarding expos in country centres. These events provide valuable opportunities for families to share experiences, build friendships and strengthen the sense of community that is such an important part of Abbotsleigh boarding.

The ABPA has continued to evolve behind the scenes. During the year, we successfully consolidated the Daisy Club and ABPA financial administration, creating a simpler governance structure that will better support future fundraising initiatives and projects that directly benefit our boarding students. The launch of our private ABPA Instagram page provided another way for boarding families to stay connected, celebrate our community and keep informed about upcoming events.

Alongside the work of the ABPA, it has been wonderful to see the continued growth and vibrancy of boarding life. National Boarding Week was a particular highlight, showcasing the pride, friendships and strong sense of belonging that exist within our boarding community. Events such as the Taste of Boarding evening gave prospective families and day students the opportunity to experience the warmth and spirit that make boarding at Abbotsleigh so special, while our boarders continued to represent the School with distinction through sport, service, performing arts and community events throughout the year.

The ABPA extends its sincere thanks to Headmistress Megan Krimmer, Head of Boarding Katie White, the Boarding Coordinators and the entire boarding staff for their ongoing commitment to creating a nurturing and supportive environment where every boarder can thrive. We also thank our Executive Committee, Year Representatives and parent volunteers whose enthusiasm and generosity make the work of the ABPA possible.

As we look ahead, the ABPA remains committed to strengthening connections across our boarding community, supporting families at every stage of their boarding journey, and working collaboratively with the School to ensure Abbotsleigh continues to offer an exceptional boarding experience. We encourage all boarding parents to become involved – whether by attending a social event, connecting with your Year Representative or simply introducing yourself to another boarding family. Together, we continue to build a welcoming, supportive and connected community that enriches the boarding experience for our daughters and their families.

Sally Ceeney and Sally Anderson
ABPA Presidents

Bequests to Abbotsleigh

Your will, **Your way**

A bequest to Abbotsleigh is an investment in independent young women.

You can speak confidentially to us about how you create a will, what kinds of gifts you can leave, and if you'd like them to go towards a specific cause such as Indigenous or needs-based scholarships, a prize, or school improvements.

No matter the size of your gift, Abbotsleigh is deeply appreciative of bequests from members of our school community.



Further information about gifts in wills can be found at:
https://www.abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au/giving/



From the President of the **AOGU**

AOGU
Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union

Connection through Community

As Old Girls, we know firsthand the profound and lasting impact of an Abbotsleigh education. The friendships formed, the opportunities embraced and the values instilled continue to shape our lives long after we leave the school gates. Today, our community numbers more than 7,000 women – a remarkable network spanning generations.

For those of us now raising daughters, there is a unique opportunity to share that experience with the next generation. Abbotsleigh continues to offer an exceptional education built on academic excellence, outstanding pastoral care, rich co-curricular opportunities, leadership development and a strong sense of community.

Did you know that daughters of Old Girls receive priority on the enrolment waiting list and are exempt from sitting the Year 5 and Year 7 entrance exams? And while it is ideal to enrol your daughter soon after birth, it is certainly not a disaster if you haven't done so yet. Watching daughters follow in the footsteps of their mothers and grandmothers strengthens the bonds between generations of Abbotsleigh women.

I encourage Old Girls considering schooling options for their daughters to explore what Abbotsleigh offers today. Later in the year, we will host an Old Girls-only tour of the Senior School and I warmly invite you to join us.

I would also like to share that Heidi Grout, our dedicated Old Girls Relations Manager, is retiring after many years of outstanding service. Heidi has always worked tirelessly – often behind the scenes – to ensure the smooth running of the office and success of all Old Girl events. She has played a vital role in fostering the strong sense of connection and community at the heart of the Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union, supporting both our committee and Old Girls of every age. I know I speak for many when I full-heartedly thank Heidi for all she has done for the office of the AOGU and the Old Girls.

With warm regards,

Bron Cooper (Ross-Jones, 1980)
Honorary President

Old Girls Athletics relay team

Congratulations to the mighty Old Girls relay team who won this year's Day Girls vs Boarders vs Old Girls relay at the School's Athletics Carnival in April, going one place better than last year!

Thank you to Kristina Moore (2017), Larissa Pasternatsky (2009), Samantha Ramsden (2021) and Ash Bruce (2012) for representing the AOGU and winning what was a fantastic race.



Old Girls athletics team: Kristina Moore (2017), Larissa Pasternatsky (2009), Samantha Ramsden (2021) and Ash Bruce (2012).

Meet our 2025 AOGU Grant recipient, Louise Stevens (1985)







Louise Stevens volunteers with the charity Mum for Mum, supporting families in the challenges of early parenthood. Louise submitted her grant application in 2025 to help further extend their outreach, with the focus on building processes, tools and training to scale-up the support available.

The funding awarded has been directed to Together in the First Year, a relationship-based model that provides weekly face-to-face visits to new mothers primarily across Sydney's eastern and northern suburbs. The initiative will extend this approach nationally, offering free emotional support via phone, FaceTime and text. Trained volunteers with lived experience of motherhood will be carefully matched with a new mum, providing regular connection, encouragement and non-judgmental support throughout six months of her baby's first year.

Since leaving Abbotsleigh in 1985, Louise completed a Psychology degree and opened Cherub Care, supplying nannies and live-in home help. She later went back to university and studied a Master of Education while bringing up her own three young children. Louise worked as a Kindergarten teacher before starting at Abbotsleigh Junior School in 2003.

'I remember doing a little dance around the kitchen after receiving the news that I had been successful in my application,' she said. 'I was so happy. I had a sense of "coming home". My daughter was already a student in the Junior School, so I already wore a parent hat as well as AOGU hat, which made it a tough interview process. I can honestly say my time in the Junior School was an absolute highlight of my career and had we not moved to Queensland I believe I would still be there.'

Louise's later roles at the Junior School included being coordinator of Academic Support P-7, supporting children with diverse needs and their families at vulnerable times, and coordinator of Learning Enhancement K-6. Plus, she had a growing interest in Positive Education and Wellbeing. Along the way, Louise has run workshops and retreats, implemented initiatives and professional development for staff and community groups, developed curriculum and training modules and had a stint as a business development manager for a social enterprise. She is now officially retired.

How did her involvement and charitable endeavours and volunteering come about? 'My involvement in charity work and volunteering began as a student,' said Louise, 'and continued through my professional life as a teacher, where I saw the importance of helping young people understand the value of service and community contribution. My motivation has always been grounded in the belief that came from my Abbotsleigh days and my own family's values – that those of us who are able, have a responsibility to give back where we can. I have also been particularly drawn to causes... because of personal experiences that have deepened my understanding of the challenges faced by the people they support. When a cause resonates with your own life, it becomes more than charity – it becomes an opportunity to raise awareness, advocate for change and help ensure others receive the support they need.

'As adults, we gain purpose, connection and perspective through giving back. After all, everyone has something valuable to offer. Whether through listening, mentoring, supporting or sharing practical skills, volunteers help create communities where people feel seen, valued and connected.

'Mum for Mum came into my life around three or so years ago. It was my daughter who first introduced me to the incredible work of the organisation after she saw a flyer and suggested I might consider volunteering. I didn't hesitate. After completing my initial training, I was matched with my first mum. I've supported three mothers through the full program, meeting two of them during their pregnancy and the third only weeks after her baby was born, and walking alongside them through to their baby's first birthday. I've also provided shorter-term support for two mothers during periods of acute need. With every mother and baby, I often feel that I receive more than I give.

'I now also serve as a peer support for volunteers and conduct intake visits. This allows me to meet newly referred mothers at the very beginning of their journey with us – often when they are most vulnerable – to help match them with the right volunteer.'

Last year, Louise was invited to a small working group to redevelop their training program, online learning modules and additional resources, helping to ensure it remained accessible, consistent, up-to-date and of the highest quality.

'I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of such a thoughtful and impactful organisation,' she said. 'And I'm genuinely excited about what lies ahead, because the need for this work is only growing.'

'The best aspect of my Mum for Mum volunteering is witnessing the difference I can make to an individual and, in turn, family and wider community. There is nothing more rewarding than knowing I am helping someone to help themselves by simply walking alongside them with a curious mind, without judgment, during a time of immense change, challenge and vulnerability. I've learnt so much about myself through helping others. Volunteering is a powerful way to create an impact while developing new skills as well as developing a greater sense self-awareness. "As we serve others we are working on ourselves; every act, naturally nourishes our own hearts as well" [Jesuit resource].'

We thank Louise for sharing her story with us and wish the team at Mum for Mum and Together in the First Year continued success. If you wish to read more of Louise's story, check out the Old Girl Profile at Celebrating our Old Girls.

Louise was interviewed by Kim Boniface (Anderson, 1985) in June 2026.

SCAN HERE

Generations Breakfast

The annual Generations Breakfast was a special event to welcome the daughters and granddaughters of Old Girls to the School. We were there to celebrate the continuation of a story that began with their mothers and/or grandmothers and the impact that Abbotsleigh had on their lives.

But while the new girls share a connection and foundation of belonging, it was acknowledged that this is now their chapter in which they'll make their own friends, will have their own favourite teachers, their own challenges and triumphs.

As an Abbotsleigh community, we are incredibly proud of the generations of women who have walked before them. To our new students, welcome to Abbotsleigh where your story has just begun. We're so glad that you are part of it.























Archibald, Wynne and Sulman 2026 tour

AOGU Honorary Life Member of the committee and experienced Art Gallery of NSW guide Annabel Baxter (Marr, 1965) led tours of the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman exhibition on the morning of Friday 19 June and the evening Wednesday 24 June. More than 30 Old Girls and friends attended each tour and were educated and entertained with Annabel's behind-the-scenes stories of Archibald Prize artists, their sitters and their works. The depth of her knowledge about the portraits and paintings in this year's exhibition enriched the experiences of all and gave us lots to admire and ponder over. An informal coffee and chat followed for some at the Art Gallery of NSW Cafe while others revisited the exhibition for a second look. A big thank you also to Stephanie Chu (2008) for organising this year's two successful tours.

Abbotsleigh Old Girls vs Current Girls Debate

In April, the Term 1 annual debate brought together an enthusiastic audience both in person and online, with more than 80 attendees in the Peter Duly Concert Hall and a further 40 joining via Zoom. The topic for the evening, 'This house believes that Letterboxd has hurt the movie-watching experience', sparked lively discussion and thoughtful argument from both sides.

Representing the Old Girls, Sally Liu (2024), Zarah Fardin (2023) and Niki Nojoumian (2017) presented the negative case, offering a strong and well-structured argument that set a high standard for the night. Their delivery was confident, well-researched and engaging, earning warm praise from adjudicators and audience members alike.

The Current Girls team delivered an impressive performance, ultimately winning the debate for the School. Although six students were involved in preparation, four speakers took the stage on the night, showcasing excellent teamwork, clarity of thought and persuasive speaking. Their rebuttals were sharp, their examples well-chosen and their overall case compelling, demonstrating both preparation and passion for the topic.

The event was a wonderful celebration of student voice and critical thinking. Both the Old Girl debaters and the Current Girls team contributed to a lively and engaging evening, showcasing the strength of our debating community across generations. The adjudicators, including Old Girl Brija Mira (1992), commended all speakers for their professionalism, clarity and the high standard of argumentation presented.









AOGU Abbotsleigh Alumni Lunch in Orange

The trees were in full autumn colour and the sun was shining on 29 May, the day of the AOGU Alumni Lunch at the historic Union Bank and Schoolhouse Restaurant in Orange. Thirty Old Girls of all ages gathered to enjoy themselves, reconnect with old friends and meet new ones. It was surprising how many Old Girls lived and worked in Orange and nearby towns and although many knew each other it was a great opportunity to meet up and enjoy each other's company.

It was incredibly special that Kathleen McCredie (1945, former headmistress from 1970-1987) and Nicola Seymour (Snekker, 1954, former head of Music) joined us. Kath delivered a wonderful speech, expressing her appreciation for being an Old Girl and of the opportunity to go to such a wonderful school and of the bond we share. Her joy in being surrounded by Old Girls was wonderful to see. Many exchanges of fond, amusing and slightly scandalous Abbotsleigh memories took place. The lunch was such a happy (and loud) occasion and it was very much appreciated by all that Orange had been chosen for this regional alumni lunch. Thanks go to the AOGU Events Committee and Xenia McGee (Lee, 1994) for organising such a great event. The AOGU will endeavour to hold more alumni events soon in other regional areas.



Angie Lyle (1981), Tempe Bevan (Bagot, 1981) and former headmistress of Abbotsleigh Kathleen McCredie (1945).



Nicola Seymour (Snekker, 1954) and Kath McCredie (1945).





Anne Mitchell (Macfarlane, 1964) and Ophelia Heffernan (2002).



Sallie Kairaitis (Ross, 1988) and Lis Arundell (Morgan, 1987).



Jane Patterson (Marr, 1973), Anne Mitchell (Macfarlane, 1964) and Chris McGregor (Mackinnon, 1969).



Anne Knoblance (Webb, 1980), Emmie Thomas (Webb, 1982), Sally Brownlow (Webb, 1984) and Virginia Conran (Pratten, 1982).

AOGU | Merchandise



All profits donated to the Kathleen McCredie Award Fund

Purchases can be made **here** or by scanning the QR code

Global vision

Old Girl Steph Chen (1995) once dreamed of sports stardom but, as she writes here, her life and career took a different – and much more rewarding – path

The competitive drive that shapes my life today didn't appear out of thin air; its foundations were laid on the sports fields of Abbotsleigh. Looking back, school wasn't just a place of learning: it was a launchpad. It was an environment that quietly whispered – and sometimes boldly shouted – that there was absolutely nothing stopping us from becoming change-makers.

In Year 7, I was collecting the highest athletics awards, and in Year 8, I was winning comps with the First XI cricket team. Soon after, I was representing NSW Independent Schools in soccer. Then, at just 16, a life-altering fork in the road appeared: an offer to join a top State League women's team playing alongside actual Australian Matildas. With the Sydney 2000 Olympics on the horizon, an enticing question hung in the air: Could I actually be a Matilda? I spent three intense weeks that summer kicking a ball against my backyard fence every single afternoon, dreaming of the green and gold.

But elite sport demands a ruthless, hyper-focus on oneself – your diet, your discipline and an unrelenting desire to outshine everyone else. While I had the natural talent, I also had a frustrating knack for getting injured. Slowly, the glittering path to sporting stardom began to feel deeply dissatisfying.

A different kind of call

Instead, I felt a different kind of pull – a quiet urgency towards a life that benefited communities with vastly less than us. That mindset, too, was planted during my Abbotsleigh years, where we were constantly exposed to the wider world. We met missionaries and advocates doing unheralded, gritty work simply for love. There was something about Jesus' way of loving the marginalised that stuck with me. Christianity spruiks itself as the answer to a satisfying life and strangely, for a teenager kicking a soccer ball in the backyard, that resonated as truth. I didn't want to just achieve; I wanted to share our abundance.

Yet, while my legs could fly across a sports field, my voice was non-existent. A friend recently reminded me that I hardly spoke a single word during all of Year 7. I was the kid who was utterly terrified to speak out loud in class.

Finding my true path was far from a straight line. I mis-stepped into engineering first, before pivoting into optometry at UNSW. That decision changed everything. By 2003, I was working in Bangladesh and Mongolia – two countries at the opposite ends of the population density spectrum, yet both starved of quality eye care.





In Bangladesh, I met people getting by with glasses creatively held together by scrap rope. In Mongolia, I found parents travelling a thousand kilometres across the icy, unforgiving steppe just to get their child's eyes tested.

Leading the flock

Fast-forward 20 years and today I am the founder and CEO of SEE Together, a not-for-profit organisation established to provide much needed eye-care services for remote and marginalised communities in Mongolia and beyond.

Founding and leading an organisation has a funny way of forcing you to grow up. It ruthlessly exposes your character – your deepest flaws and your hidden strengths alike. The instinctive, effortless confidence I used to possess on the sports field is something I have had to clumsily, deliberately grow into as a leader. It took me decades to find the voice I lacked in Year 7 but today I use it to guide a team with a massive global vision.

At SEE Together, we operate like a flock flying in formation. We rely on an immense wealth of shared experience but every new territory we venture into is still an adventure. Just like being back on the sports field, we have to trust the skills we've honed while remaining agile enough to sidestep obstacles, sprint into open space and seize moments we never could have anticipated. The magical plays happen even here.

A global ecosystem of care

Right now, 2.2 billion people worldwide live with vision impairment. Our foundations for this work were laid over two decades of grassroots volunteering and we have now successfully trained eye-care workers across all 21 provinces of Mongolia. Today, school children from nomadic families can finally access eye tests closer to their moving homes.

But our mission has evolved beyond simple training. We are building and strengthening eye-care ecosystems because isolated services simply do not last. For a school child living in a remote village dormitory while their parents are out herding on the vast steppe, eye tests and glasses need to come directly to them – and keep coming as they grow. Their parents need those services, too. In a nomadic culture, being able to see your livestock clearly through a blizzard can make the ultimate difference between a family's survival and economic disaster.

Right now, 2.2 billion people worldwide live with vision impairment

Our current challenge is ensuring these local systems – whether brand new on the Mongolian steppe or embedded within established eye hospitals in Mongolia and also India – can maintain low-cost, high-quality, independent care for the long haul.

My older body still occasionally whispers that my younger self could have been a professional athlete. But the reality is that my life today is infinitely richer than any trophy room. It feels like having a beautiful, sprawling family all around the world. As we continue to build SEE Together, I love how our flock naturally gathers more people to the cause – flying together towards a singular goal: to bring a future in focus, for all.

To find out more about SEE Together, visit **https://seetogether.org**



Some things **never change**

Boarding at Abbotsleigh has evolved significantly over the decades, yet the essence of the experience remains remarkably unchanged

A recent donation to the School's Thurles Thomas Archives – a collection of letters written by a young boarder in the 1940s to her family at Bombala, far southern NSW – not only offers a fascinating glimpse into school life of another era but also reveals the timeless threads that continue to connect generations of Abbotsleigh boarders.

In her letters, a young Nancy Rowley (Garnock, 1954) writes about school events, asks for news from home and wonders how her pets and farm are coping without her. 'How are you getting on without me? I have not been homesick yet but I think I might be,' writes Nancy to her mother and father in 1946. 'Give my love to all the animals.'

Her words echo sentiments that remain familiar to boarders living away from home today. 'I miss my horses Chisel and Secret, my dog Molly and my family and friends the most,' says Sophie, a current Year 7 boarder.

While handwritten letters were often a boarder's only connection to home in the 1940s, today's students no longer need to wait weeks for news and can keep in touch through audio and video phone calls and share photographs and videos almost instantly.

For Sophie, her mobile phone – sometimes through FaceTime – and the boarding house landline are the main ways she stays connected with her parents in Walcha. 'I speak to them most evenings if I have time,' she says.

Travel to and from boarding school has also changed dramatically. In one letter, Nancy's grandfather describes a multi-day horseback journey home she may need to make due to a pending train strike – an unimaginable concept for today's boarders who, like Sophie, usually travel home by bus, car or plane.

Life in the boarding house has evolved in other ways, too. Nancy recounts evenings spent knitting and playing with dolls; weekend boarders' Sports Days featured games like leapfrog and four-legged races.



Year 7 boarder Charlotte (second from left) enjoying a cooking activity with other Abbotsleigh boarders.

Today's boarders enjoy a wide range of organised activities, such as whale watching and attending professional NRL and AFL games, alongside the benefits of modern boarding facilities.

'I am enjoying sport and learning lots of different things that I would not have learnt at home,' Sophie says.

Despite the many changes brought about by technology, perhaps the most enduring aspect of boarding is the importance of friendship, as already discovered by Year 7 boarder Charlotte. 'What I love the most about boarding at Abbotsleigh is probably all the girls and friends in the boarding house because they are so fun to be around and are very kind and supportive,' she says.

Just as boarders did decades ago, students today form bonds through shared rooms, routines and challenges, with friendships often lasting long after school has ended.

Old Girl boarder Lucinda Sullivan (1993) remembers that during her first year at Abbotsleigh in the 1980s, it was compulsory to handwrite a weekly letter home. 'I remember one going on for a few lines with news about hockey training, what I did on the weekend, who I was friends with etc and then it took a dramatic turn for the worse with the next line saying: "You must hate me for sending me here!".'

However, she is quick to point out that bonds formed with others who understand what it means to live away from home and understand the sacrifices their families have made are what forge lifelong friendships. 'The special bonds we formed as teenagers remain as strong as ever as we enter our 50s – we really are soul sisters,' Lucinda says.

Boarders today still miss their families, their pets and the familiarity of home but, like the generations before them, they also discover independence, opportunities and friendships that can last a lifetime. Perhaps the strongest evidence that some things never change can be found in the advice shared with Charlotte by her mother, Old Girl Pip Gilmore (McConochie, 1994): 'The best advice my mum has given me about boarding is making the most of all the opportunities available – and to try not to lose all my socks!'



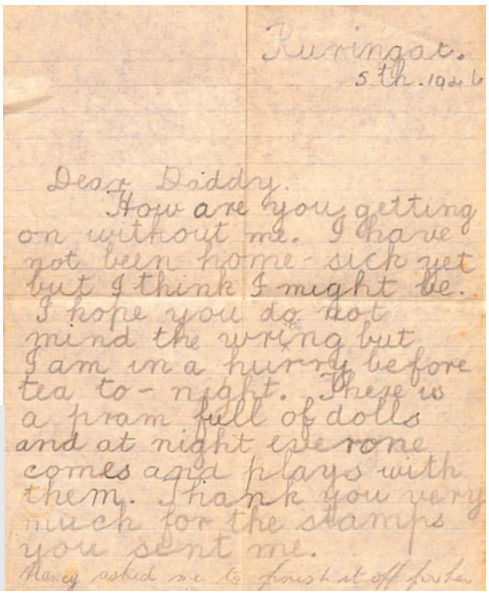
Year 7 boarder Charlotte (far right) joins other boarders in welcoming a four-legged visitor to the boarding house.



Year 7 boarder Sophie using the boarding house landline phone to call her family at home in Walcha.



Nancy Rowley (Garnock, 1954) with her Abbotsleigh peers. Nancy is second from the right, next to her best friend Sue Taylor (Somerville, 1954) far right.


Kurringai.
5th. 1926

Dear Diddy.
How are you getting on without me. I have not been home-sick yet but I think I might be. I hope you do not mind the writing but I am in a hurry before tea to-night. There is a pram full of dolls and at night everyone comes and plays with them. Thank you very much for the stamps you sent me.
Nancy asked me to finish it off for her

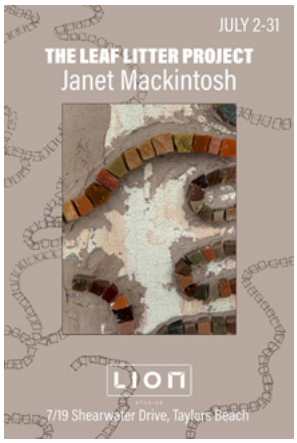
Letter from Nancy to her father mentioning not yet being homesick and playing with dolls.

Congratulations

Janet's solo exhibition

Janet Mackintosh (Winslow, 1992) has been a practising mosaic artist for the past 25 years and a foundation member of Artisan Collective for the past 10 years.

In July, she held her first solo exhibition at Lion Studios, Taylor's Beach. *Leaf Litter* is a mosaic exhibition focusing on a simplified silhouette to concentrate attention on the *andamento* (mosaic flow).







Faerytale success for Katrina

Congratulations to author, podcaster and audiobook narrator Katrina Roe (Hutchins, 1992) on the successful launch of her middle grade fantasy novel, *The Stolen Bairn*. Based on three ancient Scottish faerytales, *The Stolen Bairn* tells the story of a young girl, Katie, who was taken by faeries as a baby but won back by her mother's courage. Years later, on the Isle of Skye, she must face a world she barely remembers to save her sister.

The Stolen Bairn was launched at Wagga City Library on Saturday 13 June and in Sydney at Lane Cove Library on Saturday 18 July.

Find Katrina at **https://katrinaroe.com/**



Jill, Tiki and the Great Australian Camel Race

I am still working as a GP in a busy medical practice in Ipswich, Queensland, says Dr Jillian (Jill) Colwell (1970), and still riding my Arabian horses, including as their jockey in Picnic Races.

I listened carefully to Miss Betty Archdale, headmistress of my Abbotsleigh era, when she would say, 'Girls, you can do anything with your lives.' Which is one reason I have tried so many challenging things – like being a doctor, a jockey and an Australian representative marathon (42.2km) runner.

More recently I have become an author, thanks to an approach from the publishers Allen and Unwin. They like to produce some books for children to document important events in Australian history and were keen to produce a quality children's book about the journey of my camel, Tiki, and me in the 1988 Great Australian Camel Race from Uluru to Gold Coast.

The book, released on 30 June this year, is called *Tiki and Jill and the Great Australian Camel Race*. I believe that it will be enjoyed by children and their parents/grandparents and by adventurers and by those who love the beautiful Australian countryside.





Picture perfect

This year, Susan Sheridan (Colliton, 1956) was invited to submit a watercolour for the Biennial International Watercolour Prize held in Fabriano, Italy. There are 20 countries and 60 artists involved. Fabriano is famous for its paper-making and paper museum – and is a lovely old town in the hills.

As the years fly by, said Susan, many ask me if I am still painting! (I'm tempted to reply, I am still breathing.) I paint for myself without the pressure of a gallery wanting me to have solo shows, so it was an exciting invitation to receive.



Schools Cup Golf Day Champions: Old Girls Jo Ryan (Gibson, 1982), Brooke Fawcett (Boland, 1988), Alisa Fantham (Uther, 1984) and Georgie Glascott (Clarke, 1986).

Schools Cup Golf Day

In May, 12 Old Girls participated in the Schools Cup Golf Day held at Elanora Country Club, Elanora Heights. This is a fun day, involving men and women from schools within Australia and sometimes overseas. Prizes are awarded for the golf as well as the best dressed teams. This year, the Old Girl teams won first and second place.

As this year's winners, the Abbotsleigh Old Girl players will host the 2027 Schools Cup event.



Runners up team members: Jude Ross (Clark, 1972), Sue Hancock (Hornbook, 1975), Jane Gregory (Stanistreet, 1976) and Jenny Davies (Holman, 1963).



Schools Cup Golf Day Abbotsleigh Old Girl competitors including Jan Alexander (1968), Tina Armati (Travers, 1964), Lee Boland (Hunter, 1968) and Penny Davis (Evans, 1970).

Congratulations



Hello, Lucy!

Alexandra Davis (2009) and husband Brendan Pryke welcomed their second daughter Lucy Mae Pryke on 17 April 2026. Lucy is adored by her big sister Violet (Lettie) and the family is delighted to have her in their lives.

Welcome, little sister!

Rachel Thampapillai (2009) and husband Harry Kimpton welcomed their second child Reya Ranee Fitzpatrick Kimpton on 25 November 2025. Reya's older brother Sonny is besotted with her!









Georgia Turner-Morris (Hargreaves, 2012)

Georgia Turner-Morris (Hargreaves, 2012) married David Turner-Morris at Peel via Bathurst on 25 October 2025.

She was attended by four bridesmaids: her sister Kate Hargreaves (2021), friends Jenna Rose Whitford (Gold, 2012), Claire Monk (2012) and her cousin, Maddison Logan.

Georgia's godmother, Margie Mort (1984), made their beautiful wedding cake.

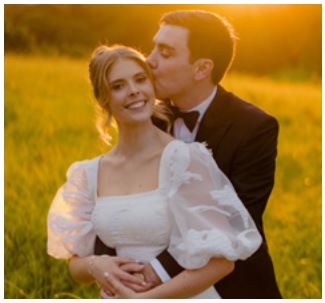
A very happy day was shared by all, including proud parents David and Rachel Hargreaves (Logan, 1984).

Dani Potter (2004)

Dani Potter (2004) recently married long-term partner Pat Thompson in a beachside ceremony at Killcare Beach. The couple have two children, Matilda and Edison, who were both thrilled to be part of the day.









Tori Booth (2016)

Tori married Matt Hanna on 28 March 2026 at Barn on the Ridge in Morton on the south coast of NSW. It was a beautiful day and a fitting celebration for the couple, who have been together since their first year at uni.

The bridal party included Abbotsleigh girls Lucy Booth (2014), Jess Healy (2016) and myself (also 2016). Charlotte Stump (2016) served as the celebrant and Bec Findlay (2016) did a reading. All in all, there were three generations of Abbotsleigh Old Girls involved in the wedding, with Tori's mum (Mignon Booth, 1979) and paternal grandmother (Margaret Booth, 1954) also integral to the celebration.

Imogen Nevell (2016)

We **remember**

Christine **Townend** (Woolcott, 1962). Died 15 August 2025

Wendy **Drover** (Budden, 1958). Died 21 August 2025

Lucinda **Wunderlich** (Rowntree, 1985). Died 10 April 2026

Mary **Laurie** (Osborne, 1950). Died 21 April 2026

Suzana (Sue) **Chandler** (Retter, 1967)

Died 20 March 2026



Sue came to Abbotsleigh during 1965 as a boarder, her family having escaped Czechoslovakia under Communist rule when she was 16 years old. Her father, Dr Retter, was a GP in the Premer district, north-western NSW and became a respected member of that community.

Sue boarded in a large dormitory in School House, learnt English, and later boarded privately on the North Shore line in 1967 so she could concentrate on her HSC studies. She gained entry into Medicine at UNSW in 1968 and boarded in Basser College with me and made some lifelong friendships with fellow students.

Having completed Medicine, Sue worked as a GP and met her husband, Dr David Chandler. They married in 1972 and raised their children in David's family home, 'Mimosa', at St Mary's.

We reconnected in 2006 at a college reunion and began annual 'getaways' over the next 15 years, exploring regions in NSW, Victoria, south-east Queensland and the South Island of New Zealand.

Sadly, three years ago, Sue was diagnosed with cancer. She fought bravely to maintain her quality of life and managed to travel back to her homeland of 'Bohemia'. She cherished the freedom life in Australia gave her.

Sue embraced the opportunities to work hard, she loved to cook and she established magnificent gardens at the family property in the Mudgee district.

She will be sorely missed by her three grandchildren and close friends and work colleagues.

Sue Hellyer (McDonald, 1967)

Justina **Catterall** (Cave, 1989)

12 January 1972 to 6 March 2026



Justina was born in Gordon and was the second of three daughters, Simone being the eldest and Chantelle the youngest. All three girls attended Abbotsleigh. Justina attended her local school of Gordon East from Kindergarten and began at Abbotsleigh in Year 5. At Abbotsleigh she loved her close friendship groups, Crusaders and being a part of the school community.

Finishing school, Justina went to UTS to study a Bachelor of Business, majoring in Events Management. She went on to organise events at the Sydney Exhibition Centre, managing large exhibitions at Darling Harbour. She also spent time working at BridgeClimb in the set-up days, assisting with events and administration.

Justina married Tim and was the most wonderful mother to Sienna, Hugo and Teya. While the children were young, Justina and her family spent six months travelling around Australia in a 4WD 'Truckie' and camping trailer and when they returned to Sydney they decided to opt for a quieter lifestyle in Armidale. For the past 12 years, the family had a small herd of cattle and Justina studied various farm courses, including fencing and weed identification, and was involved with raising and breeding the cattle.

Justina became unwell with a brain tumour, a craniopharyngioma, in 2017. As a result, she had several brain surgeries and subsequently life took a different pace. She particularly enjoyed spending time with her family, scrapbooking and travelling, her poddy calves, chooks and dog. Her Sydney friends would visit regularly for special weekend getaways.

On 6 March 2026, Justina suffered an adrenal crisis and passed away at her home. She is deeply missed by the many who loved her.

Chantelle Withford-Cave (Cave, 1993) and Simone Mattison (Cave, 1987), Justina's sisters

Thea Ellen **Maclean** (1962)

3 April 1945 to 13 January 2026



Thea recalled her days at Abbotsleigh with much enjoyment; she was a successful scholar who also represented the School at hockey, cricket and tennis.

Her achievement as head boarder reflected her popularity and vivaciousness.

Post-school years were spent at Sydney University Women's College, where Thea graduated with an Arts degree. She spent time working in the University Library and later with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Her final employment was as a field officer with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in Canberra, which saw her travel widely throughout Australia. Upon retiring, for some years she relished travelling through the United Kingdom, appreciating the theatre, the history and hunting. She finally returned to a rural life in Gunnedah.

Thea died following a lengthy illness.

Angela Lyle (1981) on behalf of Thea's sisters, Judy Lyle (Maclean, 1955), Annie Simson (Maclean, 1957) and Mary Collins (Maclean, 1960)

Frances **Mott** (Reynolds, 1991)

Died 27 January 2026



Carly Bull (Mansfield, 1991) and Fran Mott (Reynolds, 1991) in London in 1997



Three generations of Abbotsleigh students – pictured are Rosa Reynolds (Keys, 1958), Sid (Junior) Reynolds, Fran Mott (Reynolds, 1991), Sid Reynolds and Adrienne Keys (Crane, 1928).



Sarah Andersen (Alexander, 1991), Fran and Angela Simpson (Tannahill, 1991) on the Year 11 school trip to Central Australia.



1991 leavers Angela Simpson (Tannahill), Alex Bannigan, Carly Bull (Mansfield), Fran Mott (Reynolds), Alison Gillard (Wilcox) and Elizabeth Denne.



Fran, Lucy and Andrew Mott

Frances 'Fran' Mott was born in July 1973 at Bengalla, a dairy farm in Muswellbrook. She was the youngest of four children born to Old Girl Rosemary 'Rosa' Reynolds (Keys, 1958) and Sid Reynolds. Her sister Cathy Murphy (Reynolds, 1984) and grandmother Adrienne Keys (Crane, 1928) also attended Abbotsleigh.

As a young girl, Fran's interests were horse riding, tennis and she loved to fly down the hill on a billycart. From 1986 she became a boarder at Abbotsleigh. She worked hard to get her Gold Duke of Edinburgh and was presented with the award by the then governor of NSW, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair AO.

Following school, Fran completed a five-star hospitality course and worked in catering. She met her husband Andrew in the hospitality industry and they were married in 2002. They moved to Newcastle where Fran worked at Ray White as a real estate agent, where she was highly regarded.

In 2007, she and Andrew had a daughter, Lucy. Sadly, Andrew passed away in March, shortly after Fran.

Fran's second cousin Sophie Wilson (Denne 1992)

Memories of Fran

Fran and I became close in Year 10. Fran spent countless weekends with my family (I was a day girl so our family 'adopted' her) and I made many visits to Bengalla. We did our Silver Duke of Edinburgh together, which was quite an adventure! Instead of the usual bushwalking hikes, four of us decided to do cycling-camping around Muswellbrook. Sleeping in a hayshed with a noisy bull downstairs, camping at Lake Glenbawn and riding our bikes through swollen causeways were highlights. Another favourite memory is our Year 11 road trip to Central Australia during the July school holidays. A coachload of Year 10s and Year 11s, under the watchful eye of Mrs Sherlock and Mrs Barker, made the incredible three-week trip from Sydney. It was a truly special trip that forged so many friendships, including Fran's and mine. When it came to our schooldays, our last period Geography lessons with Mrs Bliss in the Marian Clarke building, above the boarders' Dining Room, were unforgettable. We day girls used to feel sorry for Fran and the boarders as their dinners being prepared below never smelt particularly appetising! After leaving school, Fran and I kept in close contact for many years and in 1997 we spent four months travelling around Europe together.

Carly Bull (Mansfield, 1991)

Fran was my mum. In my unwavering and resolute bias, I believe she was the best mum one could ask for. She was strong, curious and deeply compassionate.

I've always been told that she (and my dad) showed extreme strength through my premature birth. Throughout my childhood, my mum was the most devoted mother. Both she and Dad had an infallible and jocose sense of humour. I am most privileged to say that my childhood was not only safe and supported, but absolutely hilarious.

Mum always loved sharing stories. She also loved going on holidays with Dad and me. Her favourite moments were sitting on a sunny foreign beach or on the balcony of a cruise ship, telling stories of her childhood to us. She particularly loved talking about the horses she had growing up and the family's golden retriever, Yogi. Mum also had a great love for music and musicals. In the holidays, Mum and Dad would, to my delight, often surprise me by taking me to see a show – though now I am sure Mum was just as excited to see the show as I was.

On trips to my grandparents' farm, Mum and I would sing along to music the whole car trip. Her favourite song was 'Thank You for the Music' by ABBA.

I, too, would like to say thank you. Thank you (to the music) and, most importantly, thank you to Mum.

Lucinda (Lucy) Mott

Barbara **Lamble** (McLachlan, 1954)

Died 17 July 2025





Joanna Drayton (Lamble, 1985) with her mother, Barbara Lamble (McLachlan, 1954).



Barbara pictured far left in the front row as a member of the 1954 Cricket Team.

Barbara Lamble (McLachlan, 1954) commenced at Abbotsleigh in 1945. During her time at school, Barbara was actively involved in a range of activities and her interests included ballet, music and coin collecting. She was awarded the Mr and Mrs J.G. Hurley Deportment Prize in 1952. In her final year, Barbara was a prefect and vice-captain and represented Abbotsleigh on the Cricket Team.

Following school, Barbara married Brian on 23 September 1960. They shared 61 years of happy marriage until Brian's passing in 2021. They had four children and seven much adored grandchildren, who all miss her deeply.

Information provided by Barbara's daughter Joanna Drayton (Lamble, 1985) and Abbotsleigh Archivist Natasha Neal

Elizabeth 'Libby' **Jackson** (Stanley, 1969)

Died 26 May 2026



Libby as chief bridesmaid at the wedding of Prue Walker (Bowman, 1969) to Duncan Walker, whose sister Belinda Keene (Walker, 1967) was also a boarder at Abbotsleigh.



Libby at the 20-year reunion in 1989.

After suffering from Parkinson's for more than 10 years, Libby passed away on 26 May 2026.

Libby was my dearest friend since primary school days. I had been a boarder since I was 10 years old, so it was lovely to have a day girlfriend. Her family were my back stop; I don't think I would have survived boarding the seven years without her friendship. (I left Abbotsleigh in 1967, as I'd had enough of boarding.)

Libby was the only girl I took home who was a natural rider. If I took her with me for the first week of the holidays she would come in at the crack of dawn and say, 'Come on, Prudie, let's go riding!' Well, I decided the second week of the holidays was a better option as I just wanted to sleep in that first week.

My father fondly called her the 'Charcoal Blonde' as she had the most gorgeous curly black hair.

When I married in 1970, Libby was my chief bridesmaid and naturally her parents and brother attended our wedding. Over the years we kept in touch regularly.

Libby is survived by two daughters, who live in the US.

Prue Walker (Bowman, 1969)

Elizabeth **Palmer** (Maegraith, 1948)

Died 5 April 2026





Liz with her parents Captain Hugh Maegraith MC and Lilias; Victory Day 1946.



BA Graduation in 1952: Janet Hay (Cowper, 1948), Liz Hassall (a friend from Women's College) and Liz Palmer (Maegraith, 1948).



Helen Carroll (Kenyon, 1948) and Liz Palmer (Maegraith, 1948), circa 1946/7.



At a 45-year reunion in 1993: Ruth Owen (Powell, 1948), Pat Edgley (Strang, 1948) and Liz Palmer (Maegraith, 1948) wearing their Abbotsleigh school hats, and Janet Hay (Cowper, 1948).

Elizabeth to her family and Liz to most, arrived at Abbotsleigh in 1946 as a boarder for third year. She had spent the war years at home on the family citrus farm at Lake Wyangan near Griffith. Her father Hugh had been awarded a soldier settlement block and her mother Lilias was a local teacher. Hugh re-enlisted in World War II leaving Lilias, with their daughters, to run the farm for five years. During this time, Liz received a very good education at Lake Wyangan Public School and Griffith High.

Liz was 13 and young for her year, a late addition to a small cohort of 'Depression Babies' of whom only about 32 stayed until the Leaving Certificate. In the boarding house, 'Maegraith' joined the likes of 'Shorty' Rosemary Cole (Pearce, 1948), 'Stringey Beans' Pat Edgley (Strang, 1948), 'Mesho' Sybil Thompson (Clemesha, 1948), 'Dopey' Mary Rose Collum (Stuart, 1948), 'Garfie' Valerie Bonfield (Garnock, 1948), 'Pricey' Joan Keogh (Price, 1948), 'Innie' Llewellyn Webb (Suttor, 1948) and 'Spud' Margaret Jovanovic (Conolly, 1948).

These were the days when Chapel was at St Paul's, Wahroonga (unless you were Presbyterian), with the Abbotsleigh girls carefully separated from the Barker boys, either side of the aisle. The girls walked in a long crocodile from the School, 'green suits in winter, white dresses in summer'. The idea was to turn the brims of your hat down (they were supposed to be up) until word inevitably came down the line – 'Girls! Turn your hats up!'

As for many, the beginning of boarding was somewhat lonely. That was until Liz was befriended by Helen Carroll (Kenyon, 1948) from Kyogle. Helen had survived the indignity of turning up as a new girl the year before, without a uniform, getting around the school in a pink floral dress. She bowled Liz up and asked which of the Maegraith brothers from Adelaide was her father? Unexpectedly, Helen's family had known Liz's, from the Maegraiths' stint around Lismore pre-World War I. Helen made Abbotsleigh home for Liz and the two were inseparable thereafter.

Liz described boarding as 'much like kids in boarding school these days, sitting around chatting, reading in nice grounds, singing and playing sport'. There was 'the occasional excitement' of going to another school for a party but 'on the slightest whim' Miss Everett ('Ev') would cancel it. There were opportunities to attend concerts in groups at Town Hall, where the Abbotsleigh boarders were 'superior' to PLC, because they were permitted to wear their own clothes.

The special treat in those days was a piece of fruit in the afternoon. When Liz had fruit arrive from home, it was kept in the 'Fruit Room', near the Dining Hall. The fruit from Griffith was 'lovely, large and beautiful', thought by the boarders to be much nicer and more desirable than what they were offered upstairs. Her fellow form friends would gather round – hover? – in hope of receiving some shared bounty.

In 1949, at 16, Liz followed her sister Ruth Barry to the Women's College at the University of Sydney. Because Ruth was doing Science, it was decided Liz would do Arts. Ruth, then a senior medical student, suggested during room allocations that 'Kenyon *really* would be better sharing a room with Maegraith'. Liberated from the strictures of boarding school, Liz found Women's transformative; she made more lifelong friends and deepened those she had with former day girls, in particular Janet Hay (Cowper, 1948) and Prue McCullagh (Docker, 1948).

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts, and then a job working for the Bank of NSW to save enough money, Liz and Janet took off for London via Bombay (Mumbai)

and Colombo by steamship. They got jobs as supply teachers in the East End for the London County Council. As graduates, they counted as teachers and taught everything from kindergarten to final year, working in places like Bethnal Green. They were 'amazingly well paid' for the time, earning £13 a week, while scientists took home £6.

In 1954, Liz, Janet, Judy Thomson (Rogers, 1948) and three other friends drove a converted London taxi across Europe. Liz's cousin Peter accompanied them on motorbike as far as Copenhagen, the girls taking turns to ride with him 'as ballast'. They sent occasional postcards home, slept under a tarp slung across a rope, and got a write-up by a newspaper in Bonn, such was the unusual sight of *'Sechs Girls aus Sydney und ein Taxi-Veteran... rollen jetzt durch Deutschlands Westens'* ('Six girls from Sydney and a taxi veteran... are now rolling through the west of Germany').

On returning to Australia, either Ruth Owen (Powell, 1948) or her brother Bob, introduced Liz to her future husband Ken at a party to celebrate the girls' arrival. Their marriage required a commitment from Liz that she would always permit Saturday sailing and dessert after dinner. Liz subsequently spent the next 70 years happily living in Mosman.

After her first child was born, her professional career was limited, but she relished the 12 years she spent as a 'Trade Union Secretary' – for the Institute of Veterinary Inspectors.

Although she ultimately had 'three lovely children and a wonderful husband', Liz also had a busy life outside her family. She 'always had things to do'. She was an active member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, St Clement's Church and the Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union. She was a voracious reader of books and of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, played tennis and bridge, sang in the church choir, stayed up-to-date with educational lectures and enjoyed going to the cinema. Prue made sure Liz travelled overseas and across Australia in their later years.

A pianist, Liz subscribed to concerts, the theatre, ballet and opera, many of which she regularly attended with her schoolfriends. On one occasion, aged in their 80s, the friends were so busy chatting that they left a restaurant on the wharf without paying, only to be chased down by a waiter. Liz remarked 'it was the slowest speed getaway in history'. She was described as someone who 'did good deeds, quietly'. She volunteered to do church recording and other charitable endeavours. She hosted all her Abbotsleigh reunions into the 1990s, and was a lifelong supporter of the AGNSW, the State Library, the zoo and more. She gave weekend leave to two further generations of Abbotsleigh boarders, her nieces Katherine Brown (Barry, 1971) and Christina Barry (1975) and her granddaughter Sorrel Palmer (2008), and entertained their friends at her home. Liz also cared for Ken as he succumbed to dementia in his 60s and was a devoted grandmother to her eight grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Liz's female friendships sustained her during her long life and many of these were associated with Abbotsleigh. After she acquired a disability in 2024 and could no longer live independently, she continued to be entertained by letters, visits and stories from her surviving friends, among whom are Old Girls from the class of 1948: Janet, Winsome Scales (Webb, 1948), Pat Harvey (Houen, 1948), Margaret Connor (Kitto, 1948), Mary Rose and Rosemary Cole (Pearce, 1948).

Liz died aged 93, 24 years to the day after her husband. She is survived by her children, her sister Ruth and their families.

Katherine Brown (Barry, 1971), Christina Barry (1975), Sorrel Palmer (2008); with thanks to Janet and Mary Rose for factchecking.

Susan **Reed** (Dobson, 1964)

Died 9 September 2025



Susan Ann Reed (Dobson, 1964) passed away on 9 September 2025 in Beechworth, where she had lived since 2023. She is survived by her husband, Peter, and her three sons and four grandchildren.

Sue attended Abbotsleigh from 1960-1964 travelling from Kenthurst each day, having previously attended Dural Public School. She graduated from Sydney University in 1969 with a BA DipEd majoring in French and German. She lived for three years in Women's College.

Sue taught French and German at public and private schools, then later English as a second language (ESL).

She enjoyed spending time with her family, as well as cricket, rugby and travelling.

Peter Reed

Jann **Meikle** (Kierath, 1953)

2 August 1935 to 7 February 2026

Jann lived a life defined by curiosity, generosity, resilience and an unwavering belief that life was meant to be lived to the fullest.

Born in Narromine, NSW, Jann grew up in a close country community before attending Abbotsleigh as a boarder in 1948. She often recalled her first year in Murray House, sharing the 'Half Way Dorm' with friends Juanita Johnson (Rickard, 1952) and Diana Higgins (Mackenzie, 1952) who, she joked, were 'very bad influences' on her behaviour. One of her favourite stories was being banned from the only boarders' film of the term – *Mrs Miniver* – which she laughingly admitted she never did get around to seeing.

After leaving school in 1953, Jann spent several years working as a governess before completing a secretarial course and working in Sydney. She married John Meikle in 1964 and devoted herself to creating a warm and welcoming home while raising her two children, Libby and Ben.

Jann embraced every opportunity life offered. She loved travelling and, with her family, explored Australia extensively by caravan, creating lifelong memories and friendships along the way. Whether hitchhiking to Broome to find a replacement caravan spring, climbing into remote caves, learning a new craft or taking up a new hobby, she believed that almost everything was worth trying. Her philosophy was simple: give it a go.

She was a gifted maker, creating beautiful quilts, clothing, knitted garments and countless handcrafted gifts that will remain treasured family heirlooms. She was also an accomplished cook who delighted in feeding family, friends and unexpected guests, always finding room for one or two more at the table.

Jann was deeply involved in her community through tennis, golf, bridge, gardening, music, craft groups and volunteering. Even as her eyesight and hearing declined, she adapted rather than withdrew, embracing new activities and friendships with her characteristic optimism.

Above all, Jann's greatest joy was her family. She was a devoted mother to Libby and Ben, and an extraordinarily loving grandmother to Elinor, Andy, Callum and Jessica. She rarely missed a sporting match, dance performance, swimming carnival or special event, offering unwavering encouragement and genuine interest in each grandchild's pursuits. She taught by example – showing that kindness, loyalty, hospitality and perseverance mattered, and that learning never stopped.

Jann will be remembered for her infectious enthusiasm, adventurous spirit, creativity, warmth and remarkable generosity. She had a rare gift for making everyone feel welcome, valued and capable of more than they imagined. Her legacy lives on in the family she cherished, the friendships she nurtured, the beautiful things she created and the countless lives she enriched simply by being herself.















She is lovingly remembered by her children, Libby and Ben, her grandchildren, extended family and many dear friends. She will be greatly missed and forever remembered with love.

Sue **Stephens** (Marshall, 1957)

21 October 1940 to 8 January 2026





Sue at Primary School.



Sue Stephens and her sister Jenefer Turtle (Marshall, 1954) in their school uniforms.





Sue with her husband and sons.

Sue was born in Sydney in 1940; she was a war baby. Her earliest memory was crouching under a table in Neutral Bay with her mother and sister during the bombardment by Japanese submarines on 31 May 1942. After moving house many times during the war years, while her father was with the Air Force, the family settled down in Killara, from where Sue attended Abbotsleigh with her much loved older sister, Jenefer Turtle (Marshall, 1954) and her close cousins Nicola Seymour (Snekker, 1954) and Siri Restrick (Snekker, 1957).

Sue loved her time at Abbotsleigh. She was a very bright student – in her final year she was dux and she came second in the state in Modern History – but much more important to her were the close friendships that she made at school, and which lasted until her final days. We (her sons, Duncan and Malcolm) met many of Mum's school friends (and their spouses) and we know how much it would have meant to her that her old schoolfriends were able to visit her in the last days of her life (as Mum had visited those schoolfriends who predeceased her).

After school, and at her sister Jenny's suggestion, Sue applied for and won a scholarship to attend Women's College at Sydney University, where she completed her Arts degree. In her first year at university (1958), she met a handsome Engineering (and Science and Arts) student, Bruce Stephens. They were married on 30 March 1962 and spent 63 wonderful years together.

Following graduation, Sue worked with the vocational guidance bureau, which took her on many trips to country NSW. She and Bruce bought a block of land in Wahroonga and built the family home, where they stayed for more than 40 years. In 1965 they travelled to London and then spent a year in Madrid in Franco's Spain with Bruce's work.

Back in Australia, Sue had two sons and three nieces, who attended Abbotsleigh: Kristin Potter (Turtle, 1985); Lindy Stephens (Bridgwood, 1989) and Alison Duncan (Bridgwood, 1991).

Sue retrained as a teacher-librarian and worked for many years in the library at Pymble Ladies' College. She loved helping the students at PLC but it would be fair to say that Abbotsleigh always remained her first love!

After her retirement Sue spent many years as a volunteer teacher of English to migrants, as well as helping SPELD (an organisation which helps people with learning difficulties). She also did an extraordinary job caring for Bruce for more than 20 years after his second (and very serious) stroke in 2001, as well as looking after and loving her seven delightful grandchildren.

Throughout her life Sue had many passions, including her love of bushwalks, music, literature, travel, gardening and (most of all) dogs. It was always, however, her friends and family who were most important to her, including her wonderful and lifelong friends from Abbotsleigh.

Sue died on 8 January this year, six months to the day after her husband, Bruce. She is survived by her heartbroken and adored sister, Jenny; her sons; daughters-in-law and grandchildren, who all miss her terribly.

Malcolm Stephens

Janet Walker **Denne** (Windeyer, 1950)

21 October 1933 to 27 January 2026



Janet in her school uniform circa 1946.



From left: Janet Denne (Windeyer, 1950), Sue Atwill (Davies, 1951) and Phillippa Baird (Bishop, 1960).

It is with great sadness that we record the passing of Janet Walker Denne (Windeyer, 1950), who died on 27 January 2026 at the age of 92. Janet was the daughter of Old Girl Dorothy Windeyer (Walker, 1924), and also a mother to Old Girl Elizabeth Denne (1991). Janet left Abbotsleigh in 1950, but throughout her long and rich life she remained connected to the School.

She was the eldest child of John and Dorothy Windeyer and sister to David, Peter and Susan Willis (Windeyer, 1967). Her early years were spent on sheep and cattle properties in country NSW, first at Deepwater and later at Kinross near Raymond Terrace. Growing up in a world without electricity or running water fostered the practical skills, resourcefulness and resilience that became hallmarks of her character.

Janet's journey to Abbotsleigh was not easy. Shortly before she was due to begin school, she contracted scarlet fever and spent weeks isolated in a Sydney hospital, separated from family and friends. Complications affecting her heart required further treatment and delayed her arrival at Abbotsleigh. Restrictions on her health meant she was unable to participate in sport in her first year and severe short-sightedness brought other limitations. These experiences left her feeling somewhat different from her peers, yet she faced them with quiet courage and determination.

Although Janet later described herself as an 'odd bod' at school, she found a place there. It was at Abbotsleigh that she discovered two lifelong passions. In 1949, she learnt weaving, a craft that would become central to her creative life. She also developed an interest in photography, another enthusiasm she carried well into her 90s, delighting family and friends with photographs taken on her iPhone.

After leaving school, Janet returned to country life and she continued to develop her expertise in weaving by taking classes at Newcastle Technical college. She moved to Sydney in 1960, where she worked in the Red Cross Handcraft Department, teaching occupational handcraft skills. This meant she mastered and taught an extraordinary range of handcrafts. She became expert not only in weaving, but also in pottery, basketry, bobbin lacemaking, knitting and many other traditional crafts. Whatever Janet learnt, she pursued with dedication and with great attention to detail.

Later she joined the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, where her exceptional organisational skills were put to good use. One of her most significant roles was as superintendent of the Arts and Crafts Section of the Sydney Royal Easter Show, coordinating thousands of exhibits long before the era of computers.

In January 1973, she married David Denne, son of Old Girl Margery Denne (Crane, 1922). The two had known each other since childhood as both their mothers and grandmothers were close friends. Janet became a stepmother to Chris, and in December 1973 became a mother to Elizabeth.

Family and friends remember Janet as a woman of integrity, loyalty and quiet generosity. She was not one to seek the spotlight, yet she enriched countless lives through practical acts of kindness. Her stepson Chris often reflected that her love was expressed not through grand declarations, but through service: homemade biscuits, carefully repaired clothes, thoughtfully prepared meals and the countless small acts of care that

sustained family life. Her daughter Elizabeth remembers a mother who made the ordinary extraordinary, whether through a beautifully crafted gift, a perfectly labelled jar of homemade jam or a hand-knitted blanket made with meticulous skill.

Janet's talents extended well beyond craft. She was a gifted researcher, family historian and archivist. Her meticulous research resulted in several substantial family histories. Her commitment to accuracy, her extraordinary memory and her love of 'looking things up' made her a trusted source of knowledge for family, friends and community organisations.

Abbotsleigh remained an important part of Janet's life. She volunteered many hours assisting with archival and database projects at the School, helping preserve records and historical information for future generations. She was also a proofreader of the book, *The Lily and the Lion: A History of Abbotsleigh*. This work perfectly combined her love of history, organisation and service. She regularly attended Old Girls' afternoons, enjoyed contributing to the Abbotsleigh community and catching up with fellow Old Girls.

Janet was also a volunteer, a passionate gardener and a devoted correspondent. She approached every stage of life with curiosity and determination. Even in her 90s she embraced technology, enjoyed keeping in touch with family and friends through email and photographs, and remained engaged with the world around her. Her final years were spent at Roden Cutler Lodge, Sydney, where she threw herself into her new life with enthusiasm and joy. She attended book clubs, read poetry, enjoyed trivia competitions and participated in the different activities on offer.

Janet is survived by her children Elizabeth and Chris, her grandson Charley, and by a wide circle of family and friends who will remember her wisdom, kindness, steadfast support and enduring love. We all miss her deeply.

Elizabeth Denne (1991)

Lynette **Robinson** (Walker, 1941)

Died 11 March 2026





We remember Lyn Robinson who passed away peacefully at a wonderful 102½ years.

Lyn commenced Abbotsleigh in Kindergarten in 1928, with headmistress Dorothea Poole (1924-1930). She cherished her time at school and had many happy memories of learning and friends that she recalled in a memoir she wrote in her final years.

Her values, sense of curiosity, desire for adventure, love of art and the value of education were all founded from her days at Abbotsleigh. She sent her three daughters, Barbara Harvey (Robinson, 1970), Gay Robinson (1969) and Jennifer Thorn (Robinson, 1967) to Abbotsleigh and two of her granddaughters, Elissa Coates (Hickey, 1996) and Carla Hickey (1999), a true reflection of the esteem which she had for the holistic education at the School.

Lyn was able to have her seven great-grandchildren very present in her life and was very proud of the family she had created.

We will remember her creativity, lively spirit and determination for many years to come.

Barbara Harvey (Robinson, 1970)







Thank you to our donors

We are so grateful to all those who support the Foundation's work. With the support from our community, we can continue to provide means-tested scholarships and state-of-the art buildings. Thank you also to those who have chosen to remember Abbotsleigh in their wills and to those who gave but have asked to remain anonymous.

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